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English Theologians

EDITED BY

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AND

W. SPENS, M.A.

BISHOP BUTLER

BY

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College, Arnold Gerstenberg Student and Burney Student,
in the University of Cambridge.*

THE
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TO
MY WIFE

PREFACE

No English theologian can come to spiritual and intellectual freedom until he has made terms with Bishop Butler. Writers so different as Canon Aubrey Moore and Lord Acton, Father Tyrrell and Mr. Gladstone, Dean Wace and Cardinal Newman, Henry Scott Holland and Matthew Arnold, show the same intimate familiarity with this difficult eighteenth century writer, and the same sense of the importance of his characteristic method and spirit. These are invaluable in any modern discussion of the great commonplaces of religion and morality. It is a true instinct, indeed, which makes many Diocesan Bishops of the English Church require a knowledge of the *Analogy* or the *Rolls Sermons* from candidates for Holy Orders, and no apology is needed for this latest attempt to re-value his writings in view of the needs and problems of the present day.

I have to thank the Very Rev. Father J. Moran, S. M., lately Rector of S. Mary's College, Middlesbrough, for a most valuable collection of extracts from the *Ars Semper Gaudendi* of Sarasa; Mr. W. W. Rouse Ball, Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, for information concerning Newton's influence on the philosophy of his time; the Rev. Chancellor Wordsworth of Salisbury, Archbishop Bernard, Provost of Trinity College, Dublin; the Rev. P. P. Goldingham, the Rev. C. W. Emmet, the Rev. W. J. Brown, and the Rev. H. E. H. Staddick; and the two editors of this series, for their valuable suggestions, and especially my friend, Canon S. L. Ollard, for much generous

criticism and encouragement. I am indebted, also, to Mr. J. Metcalfe, who has read the proofs.

The Bibliography at the end of the volume contains a list of those books to which I am particularly indebted, but I must make special mention of *The Problem of Faith and Freedom*, by my old teacher, Dr. J. Oman, Principal and Professor of Dogmatic Theology at Westminster College, Cambridge. He first interested me in Butler's contribution to the theory of religion.

ALBERT E. BAKER.

EDITORS' PREFACE

THE object of this series is to make clear, in relation to present knowledge, the work of some well-known English theologians. Often their works remain unread because they are thought to be out of date and useless for the solution of modern problems. Certainly the rise and growth of the science of Biblical Criticism, to name no other development, has made some of their work obsolete but, allowing for that, there remains much which is of the very highest value. It remains, however, often unknown because the reader is unaware of it. It is hoped that this series may act as a guide.

When this series was projected in 1918 it attracted the keen interest of the Ven. William Cunningham, Archdeacon of Ely, Fellow of Trinity College, and Honorary Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and he undertook to act as Joint Editor. Dr. Cunningham did much for it by suggesting subjects and securing contributors, and it was hoped that he would have written for it a book on Frederick Denison Maurice. His lamented death in June, 1919, prevented this, but it is due to the series that his connexion with it should be recorded.

The Editors are not responsible for the particular opinions expressed by the several writers in this series. Their part has been to secure that each book, in its method of treatment, conforms broadly to the idea of the series, viz. that the works of the writer (or group of writers) are sufficiently illustrated and their value estimated in the light of our present knowledge.

S. L. OLLARD.
WILL SPENS,

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CHAPTER I

THE TIMES OF BISHOP BUTLER

BISHOP BUTLER'S *Sermons*, and the *Analogy*, must be read in the context of English life and thought in the first half of the eighteenth century. Even when a writer is in revolt against the characteristic ideas and practices of his environment, he is an expression, and in part a product, of his times. Although Butler rarely quotes, he was an omnivorous reader, but he assimilated all his reading before he wrote. His notes to the *Rolls Sermons* shew that they were sometimes a reply to writers whom he was not quoting by name,¹ and Mark Pattison has said that the merit of the *Analogy* is its want of originality. It is a resumé of the discussions of more than one generation.

More generally, the temper and ideals of the eighteenth century surround Bishop Butler's works like an atmosphere. That period, in Western Europe, had an unshakable belief in the unexhilarating virtue of common sense, was as ignorant of the necessity of mystery in religion as in life, and valued candour above all qualities in a writer, without realizing how difficult it is to be candid. Prudence would have meant less in a more heroic age, and by lowering its ethical demands to the mean at which they could be satisfied the eighteenth

¹ Hobbes and Shaftesbury, for example. See notes to the Preface, and to Sermons I, V, etc.

century set up what Nietzsche would have called an Aristotelianism of morals.¹ Butler understood what candour is better than any of his contemporaries—better, indeed, than most writers of any age. He habitually understates his case, and, after the manner of his age, weaves his arguments out of such drab words as vice (instead of sin), and ‘rewards and punishments’, and ‘reasonable self-love’. If he has laid himself open to the charge, not only of heaviness, but of a depressing pessimism, his justification for speaking seriously is the religious and moral circumstances of his age. On the one hand, Deism had issued in a flimsy optimism, which could hardly pretend to interpret all the facts of even the most happy and virtuous epoch. And, on the other hand, competent observers saw that both religion and morality were at a very low ebb. Montesquieu says, ‘Je passe en France pour avoir peu de religion; en Angleterre pour en avoir trop.’² In 1749, David Hartley said that, owing to the growth of infidelity in the upper classes, their general immorality, their sordid self-interest, and the worldly-mindedness of the clergy, the world was in the most critical state ever known. Under such circumstances strength and sanity and a true religious instinct make Butler force men to face the fact that there is evil in the world, and that the greatest of all evils is sin.

The immediate theological environment in which Bishop Butler’s works were published was ‘that mixed whirl of earnest enquiry and flippant scepticism’ called Deism. Deism is difficult to describe, impossible to define. The name is loosely applied to a heterogeneous collection of independent writers, who carried the

¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 119.

² *Pensées Diverses*.

theological individualism of the eighteenth century to extremes. The main points on which they agree are negative; that no positive religion can have the same force as natural religion; that the Scriptures must be judged and criticized as any other book; and that Jesus Christ is not co-equal with the one only God. All the mysteries of religion were easily explained, or were not worth discussing. The Deist writers insisted on no doctrines, but taught the means of living a virtuous, useful, unselfish life. Difficulties might be ignored. Doubts were waste of thought. These writers offered, in the infallibility of the reason of their own age, the best solution that had yet been suggested for the problem of the Universe.¹

The historical causes of what is characteristic of the philosophy and theology of the eighteenth century begin to be manifest at least as early as the Reformation in the sixteenth century. The break up of the religious unity of Western Europe led to terrible loss of power for religion in the seventeenth century, and ever since then.² The religious strife which resulted, especially as it expressed itself in wars and persecutions, led some men to believe that the things about which churches and sects quarrelled were really of no importance. In other men the conflict of authorities led to individualism in belief, which found fitting expression in the religious and ecclesiastical chaos of the Commonwealth time. The logical outcome of such individualism is anarchy. A third result of the religious disputes was rationalism. The most obvious solution for religious strife, a solution without which, indeed, even controversy is

¹ Cf. the account of Boston Unitarianism in *The Education of Henry Adams*, 1919.

² W. G. Peck, *The Coming Free Catholicism*, 1919, p. 55.

impossible, is to appeal to an authority which both sides will recognize. Men thought they had found such an authority in the reason of the individual, assumed to be the same, and to work by the same laws, in all. So there arose that conception of a *common sense*, whose decisions are clear and certain, and must convince anyone who is not either a rogue or a fool. It is interesting to notice that Tillotson in the seventeenth century appeals to reason against Rome in a way closely parallel to that in which, in the following century, the Deists turned reason against the Church.

The Deists began with Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648). He learned in Paris to be weary of the conflicts between Catholics and Huguenots, and, though quarrelsome himself, he tried to discover some way of ending religious strife. He assumes that God has inscribed the essence of true religion in the heart of every man, but that this has been corrupted by priestcraft. All true religion has five self-evident common notes—there is a God; it is a duty to worship Him; the true way to honour Him is to live a virtuous life; we must repent of our sins; and, after death, the good will be rewarded and the wicked punished. No other revelation is necessary. There is much in Lord Herbert's work that appears again in the discussions of the early eighteenth century, so that Leland has good ground for calling him 'the father of English Deism'.

In the Commonwealth time, the intimate association of religion with politics, when acute divisions were produced by politics, made religion a matter of discussion for all classes. There are three developments characteristic of the time,—the spread of Independency, insisting on the right of each local Christian community to settle its own doctrine and religious practice; the most

religious form in which theological individualism expressed itself, viz., George Fox's assertion of the supremacy of the individual conscience guided by the inner light; and the growth of rationalism, with its inevitable tendency to empty the positive Christian dogmas of all mystical content. The Puritan repression of many popular amusements set free much interest and energy for political and religious discussion. Coffee-houses begin to be heard of as the centres of these debates.

Meanwhile there had appeared in France an influence which has been most effective in differentiating the thought of modern Europe from that of preceding ages. René Descartes (1596-1650) taught that ideas which are 'clear and distinct' by that very fact prove themselves true. This conception was at the root of much of the Deistic writing to which Butler's work was a reply. For Descartes himself, the criterion of clearness probably came from his interest in mathematics. But since mathematics is the most abstract science, it does not seem probable that its methods will have more than a very limited application to the actual world in which men live. Pascal objected to the Jesuits that in religion what is perfectly clear is seldom true. Life is so complicated, and the needs and possibilities of human nature are so varied, that what is clear and distinct proves itself, by that very fact, inadequate, and a man-made simplification of the truth. Ideas which are so clear and distinct that they seem axiomatic and almost innate are probably those which were taught us so young that we do not remember that we ever had to learn them.¹ But that does not prove their truth. To criticize them they must be compared with the ideas of others, a method

¹ Schopenhauer, quoted by Paulsen, *System of Ethics*, English translation, p. 356.

inconceivable in the time of Descartes. But the recognition of the insufficiency of the individual reason means that 'clearness and distinctness', as a criterion of truth, has to be abandoned.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the author of the *Leviathan* (1651), in reply to whom Butler's more conspicuous ethical positions were defined, was for many years a member of Descartes' circle in Paris. He is the most effective and consistent exponent in our literature of the moral atomism which teaches that man finds his freedom in selfishness. His acquaintance with Descartes, and an intimacy with Galileo formed in 1636, explain the fundamental place which geometry and dynamics hold in his thinking. Man is a selfish animal, he teaches, and his action will be the resultant of the forces which play upon him. He will always choose, because he must, what seems most to forward his own selfish ends. Such selfishness, of course, would make society impossible except under an absolute government. The State, therefore, for Hobbes, is sovereign. He is a thorough-going Erastian, anti-Pope, anti-conscience, and anti-Presbyterian.¹ The importance of Hobbes is mainly negative. For more than a century he was written and preached against. But the cynical selfishness, in practice and theory, of many typical eighteenth century Englishmen, and the place that Butler gives to self-interest in his ethical teaching, can hardly be explained without some reference to the influence of Hobbes, particularly as it appeared in the unhappy Charles Blount (1654-1693) whose writings were almost entirely plagiarized from Herbert and Hobbes, and in Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1714). Hobbes, with

¹ Presbyterianism, in Scotland at least, for long meant clericalism.

Bacon, whose friendship he also enjoyed, and Descartes, marks the beginning of the revolt from scholasticism, which had so long reigned unchallenged in European thought. It began to pass out of fashion, and to be treated with contempt by the 'intellectuals', on the Continent earlier than in England, and earlier at Cambridge than at Oxford. Its authority still lingered in the universities in the time of Locke, who found it necessary to attack the schoolmen in his famous *Essay*.¹

An important place in the genealogy of the liberal movement of the eighteenth century, of which the Deists formed the left wing, belongs, paradoxically enough, to the Cambridge Platonists, who represent just that element of first-hand religious experience which the eighteenth century largely ignored. But in two ways they prepared the way for the Deists. They emphasized the importance of the inner reality of religion, and depreciated the dogmas which are its outward expression. And in their attempt to ground religion on Reason, although they did not use the word to exclude all but the arid logic-chopping which satisfied the Deists, they encouraged men to look into their own minds for the authority which would settle the religious disputes which divided them. Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683) held that 'Reason is the divine governor of man's life; it is the very voice of God',² and taught his contemporaries that 'the maintenance of truth is rather God's charge, and the continuance of charity ours,' and that 'the vitals of religion' are few. Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688) said that he contended 'not for this or that opinion, but only to persuade men to the life of Christ,

¹ *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book iv, chap. i, p. 148.

² Whichcote, *Aphorisms*.

as the pith and kernel of all religion without which . . . all the several forms of religion, though we please ourselves never so much in them, are but so many several dreams.' Such statements, understood literally, and in themselves, are unexceptionable. But viewed as part of a tendency, they prepared men's minds for the liberal movement in theology of which Tillotson, Locke, and the Deists represent different aspects.

In his *True Intellectual System* (1678) Cudworth gave a contemptuous paragraph to the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* of Spinoza, which had been published eight years earlier. Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677) was the most famous religious teacher the Jewish nation has produced since the close of the New Testament. Sir Leslie Stephen says that the whole essence of the Deist position may be found in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, and indeed the same book marks in some ways the beginning of the modern historical criticism of the Bible. Spinoza corresponded with Oldenburg, the secretary of the Royal Society, on questions of philosophy as well as of pure science, and through him exchanged ideas with Newton. Locke, Berkeley, and Hume all mention Spinoza. Berkeley had read him, it is not certain that the others had done so. Several writers make more or less well-informed replies to him, but the only competent criticism was that of Samuel Clarke, whose Boyle Lectures on the *Being of God* claimed to be a reply to Hobbes, Spinoza and Blount. The only Deist of whom we can say that he had almost certainly read Spinoza was Toland. Necessity was a fundamental doctrine of Spinoza's system, and any real distinction between God and the Universe was to him unthinkable, so that there was no place in his philosophy for miracles, free-will, or revelation, as these

were understood by Christian thinkers. . The only purpose of revelation, he holds, is to show men that there is a way of salvation by obedience, without the theoretical knowledge of doctrinal truth.¹ All the deistical and semi-deistical writers believed in free-will, it is true, but Spinoza's attitude towards revelation and miracles had much influence in the next sixty years.

Spinoza, like Descartes, was a mathematician as well as a philosopher, and it has been said that he made philosophy indistinguishable from science, but Locke, Berkeley, Butler and Hume need physical science, and Newton in particular, to explain them. The age in which the names of Galileo, Kepler, and Newton are linked could hardly fail to have an interest in the methods of natural science. Theology slipped into the background. At Cambridge the lecture rooms emptied where the traditional dogmas were expounded, while the young theologians bought telescopes. 'They were attracted by a simpler faith which seemed to be based on the triumph of the natural sciences.'² The age became an age of inductive reasoning.

Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was held in idolatrous respect by his contemporaries, and for thirty-two years before his death he lived 'in the uninterrupted possession of as much fame as man can have, and power never equalled over those of the same pursuits as himself.' His discovery of the law of gravitation, one of the landmarks in the history of physical science, was published in 1687, but must be dated from 1679. Newton proved that the motions of the planets in the solar system are deducible from laws which experience shows to be valid

¹ *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, xiv, § 24.

² 'E. W. Watson, *Le Protestantisme en Angleterre*,' *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1918, p. 733.

on the surface of the earth ; in other words, that terrestrial gravity presents itself as one case of a law which, everywhere through the universe, can be expressed by the same formula. Since his time, few have doubted that the reign of law extended through the universe of non-organic matter.

The influence of Newton's views spread rapidly, and far beyond scientific circles. In 1692, Bentley, as Boyle Lecturer, took as his subject the refutation of atheism, and the last lecture argues that physical nature, as described by Newton, implies a God. S. Clarke studied the Newtonian principles closely, translated Newton's *Optics*, and did much to popularize the new physics. His Boyle lectures on *The Being and Attributes of God* are saturated with the influence of the *Principia*, so much so that Newton is hardly less his guide in Natural Religion than in Natural Philosophy (i.e., physics). His illustrations are mathematical, and he claims that his philosophical arguments and ethical statements are as clear and necessary as mathematical demonstrations. In his answer to Butler's fifth letter criticizing his *Boyle Lectures*, he refers to the *Principia*,¹ which is, indeed, the dominating influence in all his theology.

No writer of the period, however, more fully represents the true influence of Newton on later thinkers than does Butler himself. He shows us the universe of God governed and influenced, in all its parts, for all creatures alike, according to one scheme. No one could read the *Analogy* without recognizing that Butler was quite aware of the influence which was guiding him.² The wide generalization and the simplification of our understanding of the physical universe, which resulted from Newton's

¹ *Butler's Works*, i, 330.

² *Analogy*, I., iii, § 20.

work, could not fail to provoke a parallel movement in theology. Emphasizing the unity of the universe, it could not but lead to a clearer belief in the unity of its Cause. 'I believe in one God' had a new meaning for men who had seen His will expressed in one universal law. His revelation of Himself in Nature reduced the relative importance of the revelation in Holy Scripture, and the wide interest in astronomical physics encouraged an abstract and unhistorical way of thinking.¹ It can hardly be an accident that, in private conversation, Newton expressed, with great freedom, views which would now be called Unitarian. The controversy as to how far the miracle stories in the Gospels rest on good evidence, which made one phase of the discussion with Deism, is a symptom of the passing of the conception of a world governed by isolated acts of divine interference, which was an inevitable consequence of the acceptance of the possibility of reducing all physical effects to simple general laws. Bishop Butler's reiteration of our limited knowledge of the whole scheme of things illustrates Sir Leslie Stephen's epigram that Newton enlarged men's conception of the infinite. It is impossible, indeed, to exaggerate the many-sided completeness of Newton's influence on all later thinkers. Pope's well-known lines sum up his achievement:—

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night,
God said, 'Let Newton be,' and all was light.

The century which closed with Butler's *Analogy* saw a decline in the power and prestige of the Church. At the Restoration these stood high. There

¹ C. C. J. Webb, *God and Personality*, 1919, p. 63. Cf. 'The stars did their usual work upon the mind, froze to cinders the whole of our short human history.' Virginia Woolf, *Night and Day*, 1919, p. 205.

have been few periods in English history when the richer laity, and especially men of intellect and education, were more devoted to the Church. The clergy exercised great influence, and, especially the chaplains to the country gentry, did much to maintain the general moral tone. But the Puritan secession in 1662, which removed many most strict and sincere men, and the non-juring secession in 1689, which meant the loss of many who represented the Catholic claim of the English Church, weakened the Church more than immediately appeared. And the submission to the Revolution settlement of the great body of the clergy, after preaching passive obedience, must have weakened the influence of the Church on those who were most worth influencing. Nevertheless, the eighteenth century opened full of opportunity for the Church. The Revolution had strengthened anti-Roman feeling in the country, and even Protestant Nonconformists regarded the Church as the main bulwark of the nation's religious liberty. The Church had leaders, and not only in one party, of great promise, among whom Bull and Beveridge, Burnet and Tenison, were conspicuous. In the Sacheverell case (1710) the Church was powerful enough to bring the strong ministry of Godolphin and Marlborough to ruin, and revealed a firm hold on the affections of the people which was not soon forgotten by statesmen. But the situation changed rapidly. It may be that this close association with politics defeated its own ends. The successors of Bull and Beveridge in the leadership of the High Church party were of a lower spiritual and intellectual quality. An ecclesiastical Toryism took the place of devotion to the primitive Church. And Hoadly is the typical Low Churchman of the time. The ordinary rank and file of the

clergy were miserably poor and the chaplains of the country gentry (in striking contrast to the previous century) were treated as superior servants. Public feeling in the eighteenth century encouraged satires on the clergy. This might have been a good sign, if it had meant the awakened conscience of the laity provoking their pastors to a higher standard of duty, but there is an impressive unanimity of testimony that the spiritual state of the country in the second quarter of the century was inconceivably bad.

Bishop Butler, in the advertisement to the first edition of the *Analogy*, says, 'It is come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And, accordingly, they treat it as if . . . nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule.¹ Voltaire said that there was only just enough religion in England to distinguish Tories who had little from Whigs who had none.

The moral tone of the period was never good, and it deteriorated as the eighteenth century advanced. The common view exaggerates the immorality of the Restoration period, for it forms its judgement from the Court and the theatre. It is very improbable that most of the people ever saw a play (there were only two theatres in London), and the tone of society generally was probably much higher than that of the small circle which surrounded the Court. But there is some justification for the opinion that the Church was more concerned about mistaken belief than about that practical infidelity which lived as though God were dead. Towards the end of the seventeenth century an improved moral tone expressed

¹ *Works*, vol. ii, xvii, xviii.

itself in the starting of Societies for the Reformation of Manners. The first decades of the eighteenth century, however, were marked by a general degradation of morality; writers gloried in expressing a heartless cynicism,¹ disinterestedness was neither believed in nor practised, and both in private and in public life there was a selfishness, a worship of expediency, and a scepticism about higher motives, which are disgusting. It was one of the coarsest periods in English history, in which it attracted little attention that a prime minister lived for many years in open adultery, and indulged to excess in the pleasures of the table. Sir Robert Walpole jested with Queen Caroline about the infidelities of her husband, while the habitual corruption which he practised in political life introduced into society the unblushing avowal of self-seeking motives, and made it possible for men to perform the most unworthy acts without loss of reputation. To understand the bitterness of the controversy with the Deists this background of the moral need of the time must never be forgotten. The orthodox felt that they were fighting in the last ditch for those supernatural sanctions without which a decent human life would become finally impossible. Moral depravity, not theological error, was the enemy. A conspicuously unbiassed writer² says that the Deists contributed towards encouraging the low tone of morals. Their own claim was that they emphasized the moral reality which is the essence of religion, rather than its formal expression in words. Leibnitz believed that some of them intended 'to withdraw men from speculative theology to the practice of its precepts'. But in a coarse, unimaginative, age the criticism of supernatural

¹ E.g. the *Letters* of Chesterfield and Horace Walpole.

² J. H. Overton.

religion can but encourage those who are filthy to be filthy still.

The seventeenth century had seen the largely successful battle for toleration. A generation before the Whig revolution intolerance had been a conviction; before the end of the century it was a mere orthodoxy. The practice of persecution was partly political, but also rested on an intellectualist conception of faith which made it possible to treat the doubter as wilfully wrong-headed. It suppressed criticism, and drove scepticism to veil itself in satire. It was the most potent influence in encouraging formalism in religion, especially when it made the Blessed Sacrament a test, 'an office key, the picklock to a place'. If the Deists, as was often urged against them by their opponents, meant more than they ventured to say, the fault was theirs who made it so unpleasant to say what they meant. On the whole, however, the Deists suffered even more from the contempt and intolerance of public opinion.

The dominant influence in English thought from 1688, and for nearly a century afterwards, was John Locke (1632-1704). His philosophy was marked by a cautious resolve to plant its feet on the firm ground of experience; ¹ it is the definite beginning of that Empiricism which is the characteristic British school of philosophy. He shews the influence of Descartes, not only in such small things as his fondness for the word 'idea', but in a fierce dislike of all obscurity; and he reveals the revolt from the scholasticism which he had been taught in Oxford in an almost morbid fear of systematising, and of the use of technical terms. He did for the philosophy of the period what Tillotson did for its theology, and what in our own time Bernard Shaw has

¹ C. C. J. Webb, *God and Personality*, p. 64.

done for economics, and Willian James for philosophy ; he made it speak the language of 'the man in the street'. He represents the very essence of the common sense of the intelligent classes of the time, and this probably explains the unusual popularity of his philosophical writings. His chief theological writing, for our present purpose, is the *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), although much of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is also relevant. He believes in revelation, and that it may enable us to know things that reason itself could not discover. But reason must be the test of revelation. 'So that he that takes away reason to make way for revelation, puts out the light of both.' 'Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything.' We must prove what claims to be revelation by the reason which God gave us for that purpose.¹ Natural religion by itself is not sufficient for man to know God's forgiveness and salvation, positive religion also is necessary, and as Locke grew older he emphasized its necessity more. He was one of the last English philosophers of the front rank who thought it possible to give a logical and exact demonstration of the existence of God. He thought he could prove that God is, as conclusively as he could show that three angles of a triangle equal two right angles.² In this he differs from the Deists, who barely touch upon the point. He accepted miracles as events which actually took place, and emphasized their evidential value. They are the ultimate proof of any revelation, and in particular of the Messiahship of Jesus.³ He was essentially a reverent

¹ Locke, *Essay*, iv, xvii. 24 ; xviii. 5, 6, 7, 8 ; xix. 4, 14.

² *Ibid.*, iv, x. 2, 3, 4.

³ Locke, *Essay on Miracles*, written 1703, published after his death.

and devout enquirer, as far removed as possible from the temper of the more radical of the Deists. Hefelbower has shewn that it is a misunderstanding to think that the Deists derived their views from Locke. Many of the points of similarity which are usually noted between Locke and the Deists are common to almost all the theologians, both orthodox and liberal, of the period. Locke argued that Christianity is reasonable, the Deists claimed that the mysterious is not part of Christianity. There is a vast difference between the two positions.

The plain, simple language which makes Locke's philosophy easy to read is characteristic of the period. Apart from the influences already mentioned, Descartes and the decay of scholasticism, three forces may be mentioned tending to the same end. In an age when science enjoyed great prestige, the practice of the Royal Society was important. 'They have exacted from all their members,' says the first historian of the Society, 'a close, naked, natural way of speaking, positive expression, clear senses, a native easiness, bringing all things as near to mathematical plainness as they can, and preferring the language of artisans, countrymen, and merchants, before that of wits and scholars.' The influence of Archbishop Tillotson, the most popular preacher and divine of the period, told in the same direction. He changed pulpit oratory. The elaborate and conscious scholarship of preachers like Bishop Andrews and Bishop Jeremy Taylor gave way to a clearer and less ornate style. Tillotson, and the preachers of his time, shew the influence of such books as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. And, thirdly, there was the influence of the coffee-house, and the habit of discussion and criticism of all subjects, even the most profound, that the coffee-house produced. It is difficult

to realize how largely such debates figured in the life of the time. Tindal's reconversion from Romanism was said to be due to an argument he had heard in a coffee-house. A character in one of Berkeley's dialogues says that in a drawing room, a coffee-house, a chocolate house, at the tavern . . . and the like fashionable places of resort, it is the custom for polite persons to speak freely on all subjects, religious, moral, or political.¹ And Bishop Butler, in his *Charge* of 1751, speaks of sceptical and profane men bringing up the subject of religion at meetings of entertainment, and such as are of the freer sort.² This coffee-house debating-society atmosphere tends to simplification, sometimes to an undue simplification. The argument has most weight which is, not necessarily most true, but most readily apprehended, and most easily expressed in few words. Towards the middle of the eighteenth century the growth in importance of the middle classes tended to increase the plainness of speech of those who took part in theological controversy.

Argument about religion does not make men more devout, nor bring into fuller consciousness what in religion is most valuable and most characteristic. A sterile rationalism makes God the conclusion of an argument. Every other faculty but the logical faculty becomes suspect. Faith becomes a dead assent to merely external formulæ. Immediate religious experience is ignored and forgotten.³ The 'inner light' is a will-o'-the-wisp. When religion is anything more than words, it becomes identified with morality, a moral

¹ Berkeley, *Alciphron*, Dialogue, i, § 11.

² *Works*, i, 288.

³ William Law's mysticism is the necessary reaction from eighteenth century rationalism.

system on a theistic background. It became in the eighteenth century, even for the most religious, 'a system of government by rewards and punishments.' Poetry, mystery, and the love of God are forgotten.

The view of God's relation to the world (denying His immanence) which is usually associated with the name 'Deist',¹ was not held by the most prominent members of the school. Tindal, for example, holds that 'God preserves the world by His continual all-wise Providence.'² But there seems to have been a multitude of writers of books and pamphlets, whose writings, and even names, have not survived. The development of the movement from Toland, through Antony Collins, to Tindal and his successors was increasingly negative and critical. These three names mark the three main stages of Deism.

John Toland (1670-1722) published in 1696 (the year after Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity*) a little book with the title *Christianity not Mysteriorious ; or a Treatise Showing That There is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, nor above it, and That No Christian Doctrine Can Be Properly Called a Mystery*. The title describes his general position.

Toland had been brought up a Roman Catholic. He was an attractive, disreputable figure, travelled, well-read, a writer of begging letters, and a political spy. His attitude to the deep things of the Faith is that what he cannot understand ought not to be believed. The mysteries in Christianity came partly from Judaism, but mostly from paganism. He never dreams that religion may be an unique experience that makes no real appeal except to a similar experience. He accepts

¹ See *Encyclopædia Britannica*, art. 'Deism'.

² *Christianity as old as the Creation*, p. 314.

Christ's miracles as proof of His mission, and takes the divinity of the New Testament for granted. But his almost arrogant belief in the reason of his own time gave great offence. An Irish peer gave as his reason for not attending church that once he heard something there about his Saviour Jesus Christ, but now all the discourse was about one John Toland.¹ Later, he grew more liberal and more outspoken. In conversation in coffee-houses he spoke of the Old Testament miracles with flippant scepticism. By the time that *Nazarenus* (1718) was published he had become a Unitarian and a Pantheist.

Anthony Collins (1670–1729) was the most conspicuous of the Deists who relied chiefly on Biblical criticism. His *Discourse on Free-thinking* (1713) claims that the only safeguard against superstition is that every one should use his right of thinking freely. He repudiates the very conception of orthodoxy, and complains that the clergy do not study divinity, but how best to defend certain accepted conclusions. He makes reason our only source of religious knowledge, and believes that a 'natural duty' is of more certain obligation than any command of positive religion. Those who live by reason are Christians, and Socrates and the like are of this number. Collins made many slips in his book, and Bentley gained a great popular reputation by his reply to him. But it was upon the weak points in the case, the mistakes in scholarship, that Bentley concentrated; the strong points in the argument he largely ignored. Later, Collins went further.² He explained away some of Christ's miracles and attacked the argument from prophecy. He held that it was only when prophecies

¹ Hunt, *Religious Thought in England*, ii, 244.

² *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy* (1727).

are interpreted allegorically that they can be made to correspond with their fulfilments.

The climax of the Deist movement, its most constructive book, and the one most distinguished for scholarship and original thought, was *Christianity as old as the Creation, or the Gospel a republication of the Religion of Nature* (1730), by Matthew Tindal (1653?–1733), who had held a law fellowship at All Souls' College, Oxford. This book is known as 'the Deist's Bible.' Its subject is the thesis of the sixth chapter, 'that the religion of nature is an absolutely perfect religion; and that external revelation can neither add to, nor take from its perfection; and that true religion whether internally or externally revealed must be the same.' The religion of reason is always supreme. Tindal assumes as self-evident that as God is perfect, He could never have ordained an imperfect religion; so there must have been from the beginning a religion most perfect. Christianity is this perfect, original religion. This *must* is characteristic of Tindal. Even more than most of the Deists he believed in his own infallibility. But the question, as Mr. Chesterton would say, is not whether Tindal was omniscient, but how, as a matter of fact, God has revealed Himself to men. The one objection to this '*must*' of Tindal's is that it contradicts all human experience. He is more radical than any of the Deists mentioned above. He does not expressly deny miracles, but 'there are no miracles recorded in the Bible, but many of the like nature are to be found in pagan histories.' He identifies religion with morality. 'Religion consists in the practice of morality in obedience to the will of God.' Butler's *Analogy* pays more attention to Tindal than to any other writer.

The eighteenth century has been much abused ; but, when all allowances have been made, it was not a heroic age. It had a facile interest in religion, its sins were vulgar, and its virtues were dull. Its ' common sense ' was without insight, its thought was pedestrian, its poetry was prosy. But its greatest figures had a solidity and ' bottom ' in them which make us proud to claim them, rightly or wrongly, as characteristic Englishmen. In the very front rank stands Bishop Butler.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE OF BISHOP BUTLER

JOSEPH BUTLER was born in 1692 at Wantage, in Berkshire. His father was Thomas Butler, a Presbyterian, who had retired from his business as a linen-draper. He first went to school at the Wantage Grammar School, under the Rev. Philip Barton, and then to a dissenting academy kept by Samuel Jones, first at Gloucester, later removed to Tewkesbury. Other pupils of Jones were Maddox, afterwards Bishop of Worcester; Barnes, later Lord Chancellor of Ireland; Samuel Chandler, who became a distinguished Dissenting Divine and wrote against the Deists; Nathaniel Lardner; and Secker, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. Mr. Jones, the schoolmaster, had been ejected from a living in Wales. There is an interesting glimpse of him in a letter which Secker wrote (November 18, 1711) to the great hymn-writer, Dr. Watts.¹ 'Jones I take to be a man of real piety, great learning, and an agreeable temper, one who is very diligent in instructing all under his care . . . Hebrew and Logic are our morning's work. We are obliged . . . to speak Latin always except when below stairs among the family . . . (we are) sixteen in number besides Mr. Jones.' The friendship between Secker and Butler lasted until the death of the latter, and was very cordial. It was Butler who persuaded Secker to seek Holy Orders, and when Butler was on his death-bed his

¹ *Memoirs of Dr. Watts*, by T. Gibbons, p. 10. Quoted by Rowden, *Primates of the Four Georges*.

chaplain, Nathaniel Fisher, wrote almost daily letters to Secker (then Bishop of Oxford) informing him of his state, and a letter after Butler's death says that the Bishop of Oxford knew him most.¹ It was Secker who posted the first letter that Butler wrote (November 4, 1713) criticizing some points in Clarke's recently published Boyle Lectures.² The correspondence which was thus begun while Butler was still at Jones' Academy was continued for more than four years.

Butler was intended for the dissenting ministry, but towards the close of his time at Tewkesbury he decided to join the English Church. That there is no record of the reasons for this decision may show that no very strong feelings were involved in the change; but in the case of a writer so reserved and impersonal as Butler, an argument from silence cannot be pressed. The first result of his decision was that he was admitted as a Commoner to Oriel College, Oxford, on March 17, 1714. For a time he gave up all thoughts of ordination. Three weeks after he had left Jones' Academy he wrote to Dr. Clarke that his letter 'revived in my mind some very melancholy thoughts I had upon my being obliged to quit those studies, that have a direct tendency to divinity, that being what I should choose for the business of my life, it being, I think, of all other studies the most suitable to a reasonable nature. I say my being obliged, for there is very [little] encouragement (whether one regards interest or usefulness) nowadays for any to enter that profession, who has not got a way of commanding his assent to received opinions without examination'.³

¹ A Life of Butler prefaced to William Fitzgerald's edition of the *Analogy*, pp. lxxx, lxxxii, Dublin, 1849.

² See below, chap. iii, note 1, p. 52.

³ *Works*, i, 331.

His decision, then, was due in part, at least, to theological difficulties. 'Our people here,' he writes (either of Oxford or of Oriel College) to Dr. Clarke 'never had any doubt in their lives concerning a received opinion;' ¹ which shows that in some matters Butler thought and spoke much as other undergraduates have done. Two of the letters to Dr. Clarke refer to his life in Oxford, ² and reveal a distaste for the place. 'We are obliged to mis-spend so much of our time here,' he says, 'in attending frivolous lectures and unintelligible disputations, that I am quite tired out with such a disagreeable way of trifling', and he thought of going to Cambridge to take degrees in Law. At Oxford he formed a close friendship with Edward Talbot, son of the Bishop of Salisbury, and younger brother of the Lord Chancellor Talbot whose chaplain Butler afterwards became. Fitzgerald comments on this friendship. 'It is one of the greatest advantages of the English Universities that . . . men of merit, in the humbler walks of life, are there brought into contact with their superiors, at an age when the formalities of rank have not frozen up the avenues of approach. . . . The rise of many of the greatest English divines to the highest honours of their profession may be traced to connections formed, in this way, at school or the universities.'³ Butler took his B.A. Degree on October 16, 1718.

It used to be said that Butler was ordained before the spring of 1717, for at that time he took baptisms and funerals for Edward Talbot at East Hendred.⁴ There seems to be no authority for this statement, as there is no

¹ *Works*, i, 334.

² *Ibid.*, i, 332, 334.

³ Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, pp. x, xi.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

trace of Butler's signature in the register at Hendred. The Ordination Book (at Salisbury) of the time of Bishop William Talbot shows that Butler was ordained Deacon, with one other candidate, in the Bishop's private chapel on Sunday, October 26, 1718. In Butler's case no 'title' is specified, and no 'Subscription Book' of oaths taken at that period is known to exist. Butler was ordained Priest by the same Bishop, 'Wilhelmus Talbott,' on Sunday, December 21, 1718, in the parish church of S. James, Westminster, of which his friend, Dr. S. Clarke, was Rector. He was appointed Preacher at the Rolls before the end of 1718, and was still 'Bachelor of Arts' when he was collated to the Prebend of Yetminster Prima, in Salisbury Cathedral, on March 27, 1721.

His associates at this time, Edward Talbot and S. Clarke, were 'Low Church' in their sympathies (Clarke was, indeed, an Arian), and sympathised with Hoadly in the Bangorian Controversy. It has been said that Butler was the author of the anonymous *Letter to Dr. Hare* which formed part of that controversy, but the style has no resemblance to that of his acknowledged works, and there is no reason to think him responsible for it. On his death-bed, Edward Talbot (1721) recommended Butler to the patronage of his father, who was translated to the Bishopric of Durham, October 12, 1721. Bishop Talbot, in 1722, presented him to the living of Haughton-le-Skerne, and three years later, as a result of the good offices of his friend Secker, to the 'golden rectory' of Stanhope.¹ It is said that at Stanhope Butler used to ride a black pony, very fast, and it was

¹ Butler was Rector of Haughton-le-Skerne before August, 1722, but was not inducted until August 6, 1724. His successor was inducted on June 19, 1725.

long remembered in the parish that he could not refuse beggars. In 1726 he resigned his preachership at the Rolls, and published a volume of fifteen sermons from among those he had preached while he held the office. In 1733 Lord Chancellor Talbot, the eldest son of the Bishop of Durham, made Butler his chaplain, and appointed him to a prebend in Rochester Cathedral.¹ He took the D.C.L. Degree at Oxford on December 8, 1733. It must have been soon after this that the Queen asked whether Dr. Butler were not dead. Launcelot Blackburne (1658-1743), Archbishop of York, answered that he was 'not dead, but buried.' In 1736 he was made Clerk to the Closet to Queen Caroline, and in the same year he published the *Analogy*.

The Queen of George II was a remarkable woman. For many years she had been in the habit of holding private supper-parties, at which the deepest problems of philosophy and theology were discussed. Newton, Locke, Clarke, Hoadly, Sherlock,² and Secker were members of her immediate circle, and for some time before the publication of the *Analogy*, Butler had been invited to these reunions. Bolingbroke says that the Queen studied 'with much application the *Analogy of Revealed Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature*. She understood the whole argument perfectly, and concludes with the Right Reverend Author that it is not "so clear a case there is nothing in revealed religion."'³ Queen Caroline dispensed all the ecclesiastical patronage

¹ He was admitted to the Prebend of the Second Stall, August 4, 1736. His successor was appointed, September 2, 1740.

² Author of *The Use and Intent of Prophecy* (1728)—A reply to Collins.

³ Bolingbroke's *Philos. Works*, i, 123, 1754. Quoted by Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, p. xxxii.

of the crown, and the work was never better done. 'For a brief period, liberality and cultivation of mind were passports to promotion in the Church.'¹ She received the Holy Communion from Butler before she died in 1737 and on her death-bed recommended him for preferment. George II was not forgetful, and a year later Butler was offered the See of Bristol. The Bishopric was worth £600 a year.

Butler accepted the preferment in a letter to Sir Robert Walpole, which is outspoken, and entirely creditable to the writer. 'The Bishopric of Bristol,' he says, 'is not very suitable either to the condition of my fortune or the circumstances of my preferment, nor, as I should have thought, answerable to the recommendation with which I was honoured!' Two years later he was made Dean of S. Paul's, which office he held as long as he was Bishop of Bristol. In the same year (1740) he resigned the Rectory of Stanhope.

We get three lights into Butler's mind during the time that he was Bishop of Bristol. First, his fondness for building found expression. In the chapel of the Bishop's Palace at Bristol, he put up an altar-piece of black marble, in which was set up a cross of white marble, which was plain and had a good effect. There was considerable offence and outcry about this cross, which was thought to be Popish. When Archbishop Secker was defending his friend, after his death, against the charge of being a Romanist, he admitted that he thought this cross unusual. Lord Chancellor Hardwicke asked a successor of Bishop Butler's, Dr. Young (Bishop of Bristol from 1758 to 1761) to have it taken down. Young made the excellent answer that it should never be said that Bishop Young had taken down what Bishop Butler

¹ Mark Pattison, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

had put up.¹ It remained until the chapel and Palace were burnt in the Reform riots of 1831.

This exaggreated opposition to one of the simplest emblems of our religion may seem very strange, but it is not without parallels in the same period. Edmund Dr. Pyle, Chaplain to King George II, writing in 1743, mentioned his father, the Rev. Thomas Pyle. 'He has been out of order with a violent hoarseness and oppression upon his lungs, and found little relief in medicines, but going about has set all to rights. He walked t'other day, to see his new church, wherein a magnificent pulpit is setting up, as the finishing stroke. In going down the middle aisle he started back, on a sudden, at the sight of Trinity in Unity emblematically displayed in the front panel of the said pulpit, and what with distemper and indignation was almost suffocated. But nature, God be praised, got the better both of the mystery and the disease, and the conflict produced, what physic had in vain attempted, a free and large expectoration, which was succeeded by a fit of as clear and audible raving as a man would wish to hear from a sound Protestant divine upon so provoking an occasion'.² So little in accordance with the spirit of the times was the expression of the doctrines of the Catholic Faith in symbols or emblems.

The second light we get into the mind of Butler as Bishop of Bristol is in the memoirs of one of his chaplains, Dr. Tucker. Butler was accustomed to walk in the Palace garden at night. On one occasion he stopped suddenly and asked, 'May not whole communities and public bodies be seized with fits of insanity as

¹ M. Arnold ('Bishop Butler and the Zeitgeist') *Last Essays on Church and Religion*, London, 1903.

² Hartshorn, *Memoirs of a Royal Chaplain*, London, 1905.

well as individuals? Nothing but this principle can account for the major part of those transactions of which we read in history.¹ This expresses one of the deepest convictions of his mind, which permeates all his work. Matthew Arnold speaks of Butler's 'sacred horror at man's frivolity.'² The flippant irreligion of his age was a torment to his love of reasonableness.³

Another interesting incident of the Bristol days was an interview between the Bishop and John Wesley. The conversation (as recorded by Wesley) began with some discussion of the meaning of the statements on Faith in the Homily on Salvation. Then the Bishop says, 'Mr. Wesley, I will deal plainly with you. I once thought you and Mr. Whitefield well-meaning men. But I cannot think so now ; for I have heard more of you ; matters of fact, Sir, . . . Sir, the pretending to extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost is a horrid thing, a very horrid thing !' Wesley replied that he pretended to no extraordinary revelations or gifts of the Holy Ghost ; to none but what every Christian may receive, and ought to expect and pray for. After further conversation, Butler said, ' Well, sir, since you ask my advice, I will give it to you very freely. You have no business here. You are not commissioned to preach in this diocese. Therefore, I advise you to go hence.' In reply to which, Wesley contends that as he was ordained as Fellow of a College, he was not limited to any particular cure, but had an indeterminate commission to preach the word of God in any part of the Church of England.⁴ It is a pity that the meeting

¹ Cf. Bartlett's *Memoirs of Bishop Butler*, p. 99.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 62.

³ Church (Butler) *Pascal and other Sermons*, p. 33.

⁴ John Wesley, *Works*, xiii, 499-501.

of two of the greatest men in the history of English religion should have produced nothing more significant. But they could hardly understand each other. Wesley, indeed, appreciated the greatness of the *Analogy*,¹ but the unrestrained emotionalism of Wesley's services was utterly repugnant to Butler's mind and temper.

In 1746 Bishop Butler became Clerk of the Closet to George II, an office which it is surprising he should accept, for the King was an open and notorious evil liver. In 1747, Archbishop Potter, of Canterbury, died, and it is said that the Primacy was offered to Butler, and that he declined it with the remark that 'it was too late for him to try to support a falling Church.'² In 1750, Butler was translated to the See of Durham, and resigned his Deanery of S. Paul's. The mass of preferment which Butler held is shocking to us, but in his day few men found it against their consciences to be pluralists.

Two letters which have survived, written when he was preferred to Durham, show the temper in which he did his work. 'If one is enabled to do a little good,' he wrote on August 12, 1750, 'and to prefer worthy men, this indeed is a valuable of life, and will afford satisfaction in the close of it; but the change of station in itself will in no wise answer the trouble of it, and of getting into new forms of living; I mean in respect to the peace and happiness of one's own mind, for in fortune to be sure it will.' And in reply to another congratulation, he writes, 'Increase of fortune is insignificant to one who thought he had enough before.' At Bishop Auckland he lived very simply, and gave much away in

¹ See below, chap. iv, p. 95.

² Told on the authority of Butler's nephew's daughter (he had ordained his nephew while at Bristol) and of Lady Saxton, a friend of the family. Bartlett, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

charity. He gave very generously to the Newcastle Infirmary, and one of the portraits of him which have survived shows him with a model of that Infirmary in his hand. He gave £100 a year to the County Hospital, and on one occasion when a gentleman asked his assistance for some charitable design he sent for his steward, asked him how much money was in his hands, and gave the whole amount, £500, to the cause for which his interest had been asked.¹ So when he preached for charity,² he was preaching what he practised. In the same way, his interest in foreign missions was not confined to preaching for them,³ for about the time of his translation to Durham, he prepared a detailed plan for the establishment of Bishoprics in America, in those colonies which were not wholly in the hands of dissenters.⁴ At the time this scheme came to nothing.

In the year following his translation (1751), he delivered to the clergy of his diocese the famous charge on 'External Religion.'⁵ The following year there appeared an anonymous pamphlet entitled, *A Serious enquiry into the use and importance of External Religion, occasioned by some passages in the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Durham's Charge to the Clergy of the Diocese. At His Lordship's Primary Visitation in the year MDCCLI*. It afterwards appeared that this was the work of Francis Blackburne, who was Archdeacon of Cleveland from July, 1750, to his death in August, 1787. The pamphlet accused the Charge of being Popish in its tendencies. On pages 2 and 3, Blackburne attacks the sentence of the Bishop's, 'The form of religion may indeed be where

¹ Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, p. lxvii.

² *Sermons on Public Occasions*, ii, iv, vi.

³ *Works*, i, 203ff.

⁴ Fitzgerald, *op. cit.*, p. lxii.

⁵ See below, chap. iii, p. 75.

there is little of the thing itself ; but the thing itself cannot be preserved amongst mankind without the form.' On page 15, Blackburne is deeply shocked at the remark in the Charge, ' In Roman Catholic countries, people cannot pass a day without having religion recalled to their thoughts, by some or other memorial of it ; by some ceremony or public religious form occurring in their way ; besides their frequent holy days, the short prayers they are daily called to, and the occasional devotions enjoined by confessors.' These sentences the Archdeacon thinks ' may well give occasion of triumph to the Papists, and of grief and resentment to all good Christians and true Protestants.' It is perhaps an accident that Blackburne omits the close of Butler's sentence about Roman Catholic countries. ' By these means their superstition sinks deep into the minds of the people, and their religion also into the minds of such among them as are serious and well-disposed.' But it may be only one more sign of deficient Protestantism to admit that there are any serious and well-disposed Roman Catholics, or that there is any distinction between ' their superstition ' and ' their religion '. Certainly, Blackburne does not find Butler's condemnation of Roman Catholic ceremonies (' Our Reformers, considering that some of these observances were in themselves wrong and superstitious, and others of them made subservient to the purposes of superstition, abolished,') at all strong enough.¹ It is interesting to notice that Blackburne tells (page 2) how some (though he thinks but few) ' clergymen of our church,' bow to the East, turn the face to that quarter in repeating the creeds, dip the finger in water and therewith cross the child's forehead in baptism, and some other things of the like sort.

¹ p. 25 of the pamphlet.

Catholic observances were not quite so dead in the eighteenth century as is sometimes supposed. Butler himself tells us that Lent was observed by the wearing of more sober clothing.

Butler was Bishop of Durham for less than two years. His appearance at this time was most reverend; his face thin and pale, calm, venerable, and benevolent. He had long white hair and a patriarchal appearance. He never spoke in the House of Lords, his silence on one occasion provoking Horace Walpole to say that 'the Bishop of Durham had been wafted to that See in a cloud of metaphysics, and remained in it.' His health gave way, and he was removed to Bath to drink the waters in a vain hope of recovery. Bishop Martin Benson, of Gloucester, writing to Secker on June 17, 1752, described a visit he had paid to Butler. The latter was 'very ill' and had said 'farewell for ever'. But there is no word of the Blessed Sacrament, or of praying with him or for him. Butler suffered much pain, and died before the end of the month. The date usually given, June 16, is probably a few days too early. He left an estate of about £10,000, bequeathing £500 to S.P.G., and £500 to Newcastle Infirmary, and directed that his papers, sermons, etc., should be destroyed unread. So far as is known, this was done. Only a few fragments from his pen have been published since his death.¹

Butler was buried in the choir of Bristol Cathedral, and in 1834 a monument was erected to his memory, with the beautifully appropriate inscription by Southey. 'Sacred to the memory of Joseph Butler, D.C.L., twelve years Bishop of this diocese, and afterwards Bishop of Durham, whose mortal part is deposited in the choir of this cathedral. Others had established the historical and

¹ See below, chap. iii, p. 78.

prophetical grounds of the Christian religion and that sure testimony of its truth, which is found in its perfect adaptation to the heart of man. It was reserved for him to develop its analogy to the Constitution and Course of Nature. And laying his strong foundations in the depth of that great argument, there to construct another and irrefragable proof ; thus rendering Philosophy subservient to Faith ; and finding in outward and visible things the type and evidence of those Within The Veil. Born A.D. 1692. Died 1752. " He who believes the Scriptures to have proceeded from Him Who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find the Same Sort of Difficulties in it as are found in the Constitution of Nature." Origen, *Philocal.*, p. 23.'

When asked to write an epitaph for Butler, Southey at first hesitated, but at last consented. It was submitted to the Canon-in-Residence, Dr. Samuel Lee, who was bold enough to criticize Southey's English, and to suggest alterations. There happened to be present a young Fellow of Oriel, Butler's own College, C. P. Eden, who protested against any attempt to improve what Southey had written. Fortunately, owing to him, the epitaph was not spoiled.¹

In the year 1767 an anonymous pamphlet, *The Root of Protestant Error Examined*, accused Butler of having died ' in the Communion of a Church that makes use of saints, saints' days, and all trumpery of saint worship '. Challenged by Secker to produce his authority, ' Phile-leutheros ' said such anecdote had been given him, and it was not improbable ' when it is considered that the same prelate put up the popish insignia of the Cross in his chapel, when at Bristol ; and in his last episcopal Charge has squinted very much towards that superstition.'

¹ R. W. Church, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

Secker in reply quoted Butler's Sermon before the House of Lords, in which he had referred to 'that great corruption of Christianity, popery', its claim to the disposal of the whole earth, to dispense from the most sacred engagements, to absolute authority in religion, and its practice of persecution.¹ Secker also points out that in the Durham Charge, Butler censures as 'wrong and superstitious' observances peculiar to Roman Catholics. In the warfare of anonymous pamphlets and letters which followed, Butler was accused of being 'addicted to superstition', 'inclined to popery', and of 'dying in the Communion of the Church of Rome'. Archdeacon Blackburne's son admitted that his father had written one or two of the offensive letters in this controversy, and Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808), a Latitudinarian friend of Blackburne, at the time vicar of Catterick (a living he resigned in 1773 when he became a Unitarian preacher in London), is known to be the author of the charge that Butler had much curiosity after 'the lives of some of the Romish saints, and their books of mystical piety.' It is interesting to find that this same Mr. Lindsey had supplied Butler with some of the works of Roman saints. This is a curious commentary, not only on the methods of those who attacked Butler, but also on the mind of that great man, whom some have too hastily assumed to share the sterile rationalism of his century.

English Churchmen in the eighteenth century did not usually know much, at first hand, of the temper and ideals of the Roman Church. That Butler was ever in danger, conscious or unconscious, of seceding to Rome, nobody now believes. It has, indeed, been argued² that his

¹ *Works*, i, 263.

² Miss S. S. Hennell, '*On the Sceptical Tendency of Butler's Analogy*'. 1859. Quoted by W. E. Gladstone, *Studies Subsidiary to the Works of Bishop Butler*, pp. 30ff.

doctrine of probability would force timid souls to seek the security of the formal infallibility which Rome offers. But nothing could be further from the intellectualist temper predominant in official circles within the Roman Communion than Butler's trust in the conscience of the individual, his curiously modern willingness to criticize revelation by reason,¹ and his recognition that, in matters of faith, we have to be content, not with certainty or intellectually coercive proofs, but with probabilities, and that these are sufficient. Cardinal Manning, for example, asked, 'Is it possible to believe that this scheme of probabilities (that is, of uncertainty), in doctrine, and imperfection (that is, of doubt), in evidence, is a part of the probation of the regenerate within the revelation of the faith?'² And, similarly, Charles Hargrove, the child of Plymouth Brethren who became a Dominican friar and afterwards an Unitarian preacher, and the record of whose spiritual pilgrimage has recently been published,³ wrote in his diary in 1872, whilst still a Dominican: 'A religion professing to be revealed of God may be certainly true, may be certainly false, but cannot be really doubtful—that is to say, it cannot be such as a wise and unprejudiced man would doubt about, neither accepting nor rejecting it. For this would imply that God may have revealed Himself in such a way as to make His revelation useless. For what is not sure cannot be prudently trusted.' And Father Tyrrell recognized that the Roman Church stood for certitude. 'It is peculiar to our religion,' he writes,⁴ 'not to allow doubt, nor to be satisfied with probability.' This unanimous witness

¹ J. R. Illingworth, *Reason and Revelation*, p. 28.

² Purcell's *Life of Manning*, i, 702.

³ *From Authority to Freedom*, by L. P. Jacks, 1920.

⁴ *George Tyrrell's Letters*, p. 7.

of three men who, because they were converts to Rome, perhaps saw more clearly wherein Rome is differentiated from others, describes what is undoubtedly the genius of Vaticanism. Butler had no illusions about this aspect of Roman Catholicism.¹ The whole method and aims and limitations of his theology are in flat contradiction to the authoritarian and scholastic temper of the Papacy, and he could hardly have failed to notice the large part which the '*must be true*' argument plays in the Roman System, which is very close, in this respect, to Deism.² Unless his death denied all that his life stood for, he did not die in communion with Rome. And the possibility disappears almost completely, in view of the fact that English Latitudinarians have always attacked historical Christianity with the 'No Popery' cry. It is the traditional Liberal weapon.

¹ See *Public Sermons*, v, § 7.

² See above, chap. i, p. 21, and below, chap. iii, p. 50.

CHAPTER III

THE WORKS OF BISHOP BUTLER

(a) *The Butler-Clarke Correspondence*.¹—This correspondence began on November 4, 1713, when Butler was at the Tewkesbury Academy, and continued until October 10, 1717, when he was at Oriel College. There are nine letters from Butler, and replies by Clarke to seven of them. The original of Butler's eighth letter was presented by Dr. Newman to Oriel College Library in 1852.

These letters deal with (1) the necessary omnipresence of a self-existing Being, (2) the argument that there cannot be two such Beings, and (3) the possibility of doing the will of God from a non-theological motive. The discussion is of very little interest to-day, and the arguments are of the type which Butler deliberately refrained from using in the *Sermons* and the *Analogy*.

(b) *Fifteen Sermons Preached at the Rolls Chapel*.—On his ordination in 1718, Butler was appointed Preacher at the Rolls, being then twenty-six years of age. He held this appointment until 1726, when he resigned it on being made Rector of Stanhope in Weardale (he had previously held the rectory of Haughton-le-Skerne with his Preachership). The same year he published a volume containing fifteen of the sermons, chosen more or less at random as typical of the others, he had preached there during those eight years. The sermons seem to a spoiled modern taste a little long and heavy, but they were not

¹ Butler's *Works*, i, 311-39.

unusual in an age which could remember the sermons of Isaac Barrow, who once preached so long in Westminster Abbey that the officials had the organ turned on. Of an earlier generation, Burnet records that Bishop William Forbes (Bishop of Edinburgh in 1634) had 'a strange faculty of preaching five or six hours at a time.' Butler's *Sermons at the Rolls* are among the most important treatises on ethics in the language, and Lord Acton considered their importance, if not their merit, to be greater than that of the *Analogy*.¹ Our respect for these sermons is not diminished by remembering that they were preached before Butler was thirty-four years old.

In the preface to the *Sermons*, the preacher apologizes for their difficulty. A work in which a man aims at truth, and therefore has to 'state things as he finds them' ² cannot always be written in a familiar and easy manner. 'Everything is not to be understood with the ease that some things are.' Butler expects from his readers 'that religious and sacred attention which is due to truth.' He proposes to treat morals inductively, arguing from matters of fact and observation, such as the nature of man and its several parts. He chooses this method, partly because he hopes thereby to satisfy fair-minded men, but also because it is more easily applicable to the particular circumstances of life.

The first three sermons deal with the nature of man, particularly in view of the common assertion that virtue consists in following nature, and vice in deviating from it. Butler teaches that the nature of man is a constitution or system in which appetites, passions, and affections are regulated by the two great principles of rational

¹ Lord Acton's *Correspondence*, i, 226.

² *Works*, i, 3.

self-love and benevolence, and the whole is held together by the supreme authority of conscience (or, as Butler sometimes calls it, the principle of reflection). Without considering which principle or motive in human nature is strongest, either at the moment or generally, conscience is superior and chief, and has authority over all else, 'for this absolute direction and control is part of the very idea of conscience. 'Had it strength, as it has right, had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world.' To obey conscience, then, is to act 'according to nature.' It is in this sense that we can speak of man being a 'law unto himself.' 'The very constitution of our nature requires that we . . . make it the business of our lives . . . to conform ourselves to (this superior faculty). This is the whole meaning of that ancient precept, Reverence Thyself.' The obligation to obey conscience, then, is that it is the law of our own nature, 'the guide assigned us by the Author of our nature.'

Butler's insistence on the supreme authority of conscience is developed in opposition to Shaftesbury. The latter recognized the existence of conscience, but not its natural authority. He seems to have thought of it as one principle among others in a man. So that if it is not clear to a man that it is his own interest, in a particular case, to obey his conscience, then he is justified in following his interest, even if it leads him to vice, for self-interest is obviously a natural obligation for everyone. As against this view, Butler maintains that the only alternative to the absolute supremacy of conscience is to teach that conscience, benevolence, and self-will should each take their turn among other motives, such as the different passions and appetites, and each in its turn have some influence. Then, for example, the

murder of a father would be natural at one moment ; and filial duty at another time would be no less, and no more, natural, equally to be approved or disapproved. This would reduce life to absurdity. But though a man should doubt of everything else, the absolute authority which is a constituent part of conscience would place him under the most certain obligation to the practice of virtue.

But Butler does not admit that conscience and self-interest are ever in conflict. Even when, in a particular case, vice and self-love seem to go together, when we consider man, and his condition, and the shortness of his life, realizing how very little can possibly in any case be gained by vice, it is not a great thing to sacrifice so little for conscience' sake, which is the most intimate of all obligations ; 'and which a man cannot transgress without being self-condemned, and, unless he has corrupted his nature, without real self-dislike.' In actual life, and in all but the most exceptional circumstances, there is seldom any divergence between the dictates of conscience and what even on a narrow short view, seems to be self-interest. 'It is much seldomer that there is inconsistency between duty and what is really our present interest. But if there be sometimes such inconsistency, all shall be set right at the final distribution of things. Evil cannot be supposed finally triumphing over good in a perfect administration of things.'

Butler's doctrine is that these two principles, reflection or conscience and reasonable self-love, are the only things in human nature of such unique superiority that they cannot be contradicted without violating our nature. Self-love, then, is natural, in a sense in which benevolence is not. But, as against Hobbes, Butler teaches that there is a principle of benevolence in man, as real as

self-love, and not to be confused with it, or interpreted as a modification of it. Hobbes says of benevolence, 'There can be no greater argument to a man of his own power than to find himself able not only to accomplish his own desires, but also to assist other men in theirs.'¹ Butler in a note to Sermon i, § 6, states that Hobbes says that Benevolence is the love of power, which is perhaps unjust to Hobbes, but he seems quite right when he says,² that Hobbes makes fear and pity the same thing, which from the common use of words, and from self-examination, they are not. Benevolence and self-love are different principles, though Butler maintains that we can scarcely promote one without the other. A man's conscience is generally supposed to approve the actions done through benevolence more than those done from self-love. And the arguments by which men try to disprove the existence of unselfishness and benevolence in human nature, would equally disprove the existence of self-love. There are people who seem to have no natural affection for others, but there are others who seem to have no natural affection for themselves. Men as often injure themselves as others, and if few are completely benevolent, as few attain for themselves all the satisfaction and enjoyment they might.

The theory of human nature outlined in the first three sermons is applied and amplified in the remaining twelve. The sermon on the government of the tongue (iv) describes the evil that results from talkativeness, and outlines the cure under three heads: (1) silence; (2) the talking about indifferent things. Butler reminds us that useful subjects of conversation are often as entertaining as others; (3) the giving of characters. It is as

¹ *Human Nature*, ix, 17.

² In a note to the *Rolls Sermons*, v, § 1

important for society to know the characters of bad men as those of good ; but a man is not injured so much by undeserved good said of him as by undeserved evil. The next two Sermons (v and vi) deal with compassion, and are best considered along with xi and xii, on the love of our neighbour. By the feeling of compassion we substitute the interest of others for our own, and have the same kind of delight in their prosperity, and sorrow in their distress, as come from reflection on our own. When compassion is allowed scope, under the guidance of reason, we act suitably to our nature, and to the circumstances God has placed us in. Just as want of the natural appetite for food implies some bodily disease, so apathy means something amiss with the health of the mind. Our nature is the voice of God within us, and if we are to avoid the extremes of superstition and irreligion, we must obey that voice (*Ecclus.* xxxii. 23). The natural feeling of compassion is meant by God to restrain resentment, envy, and unreasonable self-love, to stimulate reason and benevolence, and to remind us of the obligation that pain and sorrow and misery put upon us, a debt to ourselves as well as to the distressed.

The two sermons (xi, xii), *Upon the love of our neighbour*, discuss the nature of self-love and disinterestedness. It was the fashion of Butler's day, he says,¹ to profess a greater regard for self-interest than appears to have been done formerly. Self-love is the general desire that each man has for his own happiness and satisfaction ; what is or is not our interest or good is determined by nature, self-love only moves us to secure it. Happiness results from the enjoyment of what is adapted to all our faculties ; this consideration, and general appearances, suggest that selfishness, immoderate self-love, does not

¹ xi, § 1.

lead to the greatest happiness. That a certain action makes for the good of others, does not prevent it meaning our own happiness also.

It is sometimes argued that to love one's neighbour as one's self would mean the neglect of one's own interest, but there is really no reason to fear this. All that we owe to others is a disposition and endeavour to do good to those with whom we have to do, in the degree and manner required by our relation to them. This is benevolence, and the common virtues and vices of mankind can be traced to benevolence or the lack of it.

But, in spite of common language, the distinction between good or bad is not identical with that between disinterested and interested. Due self-love is just and morally good, and disinterested cruelty is the utmost possible depravity. Neither is it true that self-love is in general too strong in men. It is weaker, often, than curiosity or hatred, or any passing appetite or passion. Its influence is due to its being constant. Men have not enough regard to their own good or interest in the present world; and they have too little regard to the good of others.¹ Although self-love is by no means a completely religious or moral rule of life, to act on it consistently would be less mischievous than to be ruled by the extravagances of mere whim or appetite.

The sermons on the character of Balaam (vii) and upon self-deceit (x) both relate to the self-partiality, self-flattery, and self-deceit from which comes a great part of the wickedness of the world. Balaam owns and feels the divine authority, and has, indeed, the most just and true notions of God and religion. He has the better character and more desirable state in his thoughts and in his wishes, full before him. And he voluntarily chooses the worse.

¹ Preface to *Rolls Sermons*, § 40

He seeks indulgence for plain wickedness. And he does so by dressing it up in a new form, he glosses it over, in order to make it pass off more easily with himself. Men can and will be wicked, with calmness and thought, in the face of their hopes and fears concerning God and a future state, because they indulge one kind of self-deceit or another. Self-deceit is an inward dishonesty, the exact opposite of that childlike simplicity without which we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven, and there is such a thing as men's being honest in such a degree and in such respects, but no further. Vice in general consists in that false self-love or selfishness, which means an unreasonable regard, in comparison with others, for that self which we are all so fond of. People are capable of being thus artful with themselves in proportion as they are capable of being so with others. But 'things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be, why then should we desire to be deceived?'¹

The sermon on resentment (viii) is an introduction to that on the forgiveness of injuries (ix). Resentment, as a natural passion, is itself indifferent.² Sudden resentment is usually self-regarding, and stands for self-defence; that settled and deliberate indignation raised by cruelty and injustice, and the desire of having them punished, is felt by persons disinterested. This latter is one of the common bonds by which society is held together, a fellow-feeling which each individual has in behalf of the whole species as well as of himself; it is to be considered as a weapon put into our hands by Nature, against injury, injustice, and cruelty, and it does not appear, generally speaking, that it is at all too high among mankind.

¹ *Rolls Sermons*, vii, § 1.

² Cf. S. Paul, 'Be ye angry, and sin not.'

But if mankind is one body, resentment is, with respect to society, a painful remedy, which 'ought never to be made use of, but only in order to produce some greater good.'¹ Still less is revenge lawful. We are not allowed to render evil for evil. Resentment begets resentment in the object of it, and so there would be a continual adding fuel to the fire. Rather should injury, injustice, oppression, and ingratitude move us to compassion as well as to indignation, as they did our Saviour on the Cross. We must forgive, because we hope for forgiveness.² Forgiveness is one of the very few moral obligations which has been disputed,³ but it is in truth the law of our nature, grounded in the obligation to universal benevolence, and must not be destroyed by resentment.

The two sermons (xiii and xiv) on the Love of God reveal a side of Butler's religion which is often ignored. There is danger lest his massive reasoning powers should make a reader think that for him God was only the conclusion of an argument, and religion 'so very reasonable, as to have nothing to do with the heart and affections.'⁴ There is, however, an unusual balance and breadth, almost an universality, about Butler's mind. Whenever a judgement of him is formed, condemning him for some weakness or lack, it is almost always possible to discover one or more passages in his writings which will lead to a modification of such an adverse opinion. The critic who is inclined to condemn Butler's religion as a painful practice of prudence, and avoiding of vice, in the expectation of rewards and the fear of punishments, reading these two sermons on the Love of God, would see that it is rather the desire to be made

¹ *Rolls Sermons*, ix, § 6.

² ix, § 28.

³ Preface to *Sermons*, § 33.

⁴ *Rolls Sermons*, xiii, § 1.

partaker of the Divine nature which is the ground of his hunger and thirst for righteousness.¹ 'When we are commanded to love the Lord our God, with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our soul; somewhat more must be meant than merely that we live in hope of rewards or fear of punishments from Him.'² 'All the common enjoyments of life,' he says, 'are from the faculties He has endowed us with, and the objects He hath made suitable to them. He may Himself be to us infinitely more than all these; He may be to us all that we want.'³ . . . What then will be the joy of heart which His presence, and 'the light of His countenance,' Who is the life of the universe, will inspire good men with, when they shall have a sensation that He is the Sustainer of their being, that they exist in Him, when they shall feel His influence to cheer and enliven and support their frame, in a manner of which we have now no conception? He will be in a literal sense, 'their strength and their portion for ever.'⁴ Such a passage as this, like the beautiful collection of quotations from the Psalms with which the sermon closes, gets its meaning from the character of the man who spoke it, his examination of each word, his tendency to under-state what he wants to say, his suspicion of enthusiasm or emotion. As Carlyle says of Cromwell, he 'spoke things'.

Much that is characteristic of Butler's later work in apologetic theology, the *Analogy*, is contained in germ in the fifteenth sermon at the Rolls, *Upon the Ignorance of Man*. Since the monarchy of the universe is a dominion unlimited in extent, and everlasting in duration, the

¹ See fragments in Butler's handwriting in British Museum Works, i, 357.

² *Rolls Sermons*, Preface, § 44.

³ *Ibid.*, xiv. § 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xiv. § 15.

general system of it must necessarily be quite beyond our comprehension, because we cannot have a thorough knowledge of any part, without knowing the whole ; and as the dealings of God with the children of men are not yet completed, they cannot be judged of by that part which is before us.¹ Because of our ignorance it follows that however perfect things are, they necessarily appear to be less perfect than they are. But our ignorance is not to be deplored, especially if we recognize it. We have capacities and knowledge fully equal to our duty. It is clear that our proper end and happiness is not to acquire knowledge, and if God has willed us to walk in the twilight, we must nevertheless use our eyes and follow them, and not despise the little light we have, because it is not the full glare of noon.² Our province is virtue and religion, life and manners, the science of improving the temper, and making the heart better. This is the field assigned to us to cultivate ; how much it has lain neglected is indeed astonishing.

(c) *The Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Nature* was first published in 1736, with a dedication to Lord Chancellor Talbot, whose chaplain the author had been since 1733. In addition to a brief 'Advertisement,' it consists of an Introduction, two Parts, the former on Natural Religion, the second on Revealed Religion, and two dissertations, 'Of Personal Identity,' and 'Of the Nature of Virtue'. An index was prepared by Bentham (afterwards Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford from 1763 to 1776) and revised by Butler himself.³

The *Introduction* states three positions which are fundamental to Butler's argument. First, that to such

¹ xv, § 6. Cf. *Analogy* I, vii.

² xv, § 14.

³ See Bernard's Preface to the *Analogy*.

limited creatures as we are, probability is the very guide of life.¹ Probability depends on what Butler calls likeness, and this idea is most often expressed in the form of argument called *Analogy*. So that the whole structure of Butler's argument is a denial of the value or possible in religion of such *a priori* intellectually-compelling certainty as is possible in mathematics. Secondly, it is part of this acceptance of the humbler method of learning from experience, and arguing from the known to the unknown, 'from that part of the Divine Government over intelligent creatures which comes under our view, to that larger and more general government over them which is beyond it,'² that, on the one hand, Butler asserts that it is beyond our powers to lay down *a priori* the conditions which nature or revelation ought to fulfil; man cannot say what God *must* do;³ and, on the other hand, he does not begin from first principles, examining and criticizing his assumptions, as Descartes before him, and Kant after him, thought they did. He assumes whatever common ground he can find between the Deists and himself. 'An Author of Nature is here supposed,'⁴ he says, because the Deists were not Atheists. But logically his argument does not assume so much as this. It is satisfied if we can postulate a rational order in the universe. Thirdly, there is the statement, based on the passage from Origen already quoted,⁵ of the analogy between Religion and Nature. If we compare the system of Religion, Natural and Revealed, with the known course of Nature, 'the acknowledged dispensations of Providence,' we shall find that they are analogous. This will give ground for the presumption that they have both the same author and

¹ § 3.⁴ § 6.² § 7.³ § 10.⁵ Above, chap. ii, p. 35.

cause, 'at least so far as to answer objections against the former's being from God, drawn from anything which is analogous to what is in the latter, which is acknowledged to be from Him.' 'The system of Religion . . . is not a subject of ridicule unless that of Nature be so too.'¹ The remainder of the book is a detailed application of this argument.

Part I deals with Natural Religion, and the first chapter argues that Mankind is appointed to live in a future state. It is natural for creatures to exist at one time with very different capacities from those they have at another. The Analogy of Nature, then, makes it credible that we may exist after death in a state vastly different from our present one.² Because we believe that what now exists will continue, unless we have reason to think it will be altered, it must be probable we shall survive death, if there be no ground to think death will be our destruction. But we know not at all what death is in itself, and its effects do not appear to imply the destruction of a living agent. Neither does the Analogy of Nature tell against immortality. Death destroys the *sensible* proof that creatures live, it gives no positive reason for thinking them thereby deprived of their powers; that they possess them up to the time of their death, is itself a probability of their retaining them beyond it. In this connection we must not allow imagination to rule us, for though imagination is of some assistance to apprehension, it is the author of all error.³ Further, the fact that consciousness is indivisible implies that the subject in which it inheres is also indivisible, and therefore

¹ §§ 6, 11, 12.

² i. 1, § 2.

³ i. 1, §§ 3-7.

indestructible and immortal.¹ It is as easy to conceive that we may exist out of bodies as in them. Our organs of sense and our limbs are instruments of the self, not parts of it. Although soul and body mutually affect each other, our mental faculties do not depend on the body in any such manner as to give ground to think that the dissolution of the body will mean the dissolution of the self, or the destruction of its powers; our relation to the body and its organs may be the only natural hindrance to our existing in a higher and more enlarged state of life than the present.²

In the future state appointed for us, everyone will be rewarded or punished (Chapter II, Part I) for in the present state, we have hardly any enjoyment or pleasure but by the result of our own actions, and many are pleased to make themselves extremely miserable; for the Author of Nature has made us able to foresee the consequences of our actions.³ This is the proper foundation of government, to annex pleasure to some actions, pain to others, in our power to do or forbear, and to give notice of this appointment beforehand to those whom it concerns.⁴ And we do not make it less the act of God, or God's

¹ i. 1, § 8. This argument was used by S. Clarke, *Boyle Lectures*, p. 266, but is now generally abandoned. Cf. Kant, *Kritik of Pure Reason*, Max Müller's Translation, p. 186. Dugald Stewart, quoted in Joseph Angus' Edition of *Butler*, p. 21, and Dr. Bernard's note. *Works*, vol. ii., p. 29. But cf. in support of Butler, McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, pp. 107-9, and a similar argument is used freely by scholastic philosophers.

² i. 1, §§ 8-20. These reasons for the denial of the necessary dependence of the soul on the body seem quite valid, and are widely accepted by philosophers and poets. Cf., e.g., McTaggart, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-6; Andrew Marvell, *Dialogue between Soul and Body*; Rupert Brooke, *Sonnet suggested by Proceedings of the S. P. R.*

³ I, ii. § 2.

⁴ I, ii. § 6. ¹

government, to ascribe it to the general course of Nature. The natural course of things is the appointment of God.¹ Butler now slips from talk of pleasures and pains to talk of rewards and punishments, but his only justification for the change is his assertion that 'there is no doubt' that the foreseen pleasures and pains were intended, in general, to induce mankind to act in such and such manner.² The whole Analogy of Nature, then, shows that there is nothing incredible in the doctrine of religion that God will reward and punish men for their actions hereafter.³

The third chapter of Part I deals with God's *moral* government, that is, it contends that He not only rewards and punishes men for their actions, but rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked.⁴ In this world, the Divine government is not perfectly moral, for the perfection of moral government consists in rewarding and punishing, with regard to all intelligent creatures, in an exact proportion to their personal merits or demerits.⁵ The need of discipline, and the fact that our happiness and misery are put in each other's power, and the actions of general laws, often secure that vicious actions shall be rewarded, and virtuous actions punished.⁶ In fact, pleasures and pains seem to be distributed without much apparent regard to merit or demerit. But there are obvious instances of moral government in the world. From the mere fact of general laws, or of government at all, it follows that prudence and imprudence, which are of

¹ I, ii. § 4. Cf. Butler's definition of 'Natural,' *Analogy* i. 1, § 23.

² I, ii. §§ 5, 6.

³ I, ii. § 8.

⁴ I, iii. § 2.

⁵ I, iii. § 2. This is, of course, a meaningless statement. The characters of men cannot be compared as their weights are.

⁶ I, iii. § 15.

the nature of virtue and vice,¹ must be, as they are, respectively rewarded and punished.² And Butler thinks we can discern a tendency in virtue and vice to produce good and bad effects to a greater degree than they do in fact produce them,³ and can perceive that the hindrances are not necessary, and easily conceive how they may be removed in a future state.⁴ And in domestic government, which is a form of 'natural' government, children are punished for ill-behaviour, *as such*, and rewarded for the contrary.⁵ Further, virtue in a society has a tendency to procure superiority and additional power for that society, by rendering public good an object and end for every one of its members.⁶ The fact that God has given us a moral nature is a proof of our being under His moral government, and that He has placed us in a condition which gives this nature scope to operate, is an additional proof of it.⁷ And if the universe and the plan of Providence be as vast as the recent discoveries of Newton would lead men to believe,⁸ and in any sort analogous to what we can observe, or if the visible and invisible make one uniform scheme, then the fact that the beginning of a moral government can be discerned here justifies us in expecting a perfect moral government in a future state. For God has given us a declaration which side He is of, a declaration for virtue and against vice. So far, therefore, as a man is true to virtue, to veracity and justice, to equity and charity, and to the right of the case in whatever he is concerned, so far he is on the side of the Divine administration, and co-operates with

¹ A characteristically eighteenth century statement.

² I, iii. § 7.

³ I, iii. § 17.

⁴ I, iii. § 20.

⁵ I, iii. § 12.

⁶ I, iii. § 19.

⁷ I, iii. § 13.

⁸ I, iii. § 20.

it.¹ And this is true, although Butler omits to say it, whether pleasure or pain be his lot.

Our present life is a probation, a state of trial and of discipline for the future life (Part I, chapters iv and v). The argument by which Butler proves that it is credible that this life is a state of trial for a future one, is one of the happiest examples of his use of the method of analogy. Our highest interests in this present life depend in part on ourselves, and many run themselves into great inconvenience and misery through their own fault. If we attain happiness and success it is because we overcome the enticements and difficulties created for us by external circumstances and our inner whims and impulses. Some yield and lose their worldly interest through carelessness, or because they are deceived by inordinate passion, or are too weak to resist and overcome, or make their own self-will and immediate pleasure the law of their life. And our pursuit of our true worldly interest is often made more difficult, by faulty education and unsuitable friends, and the longer we live the further we get from it. But it is not impossible if we give our minds to it, for men do, by a moderate degree of care, manage to pass their lives on earth in tolerable ease and satisfaction. Now religion teaches that, in an exactly analogous manner, our present life is a state of probation for the life after death. Temptations and trials come, in the same way, from without and within to draw the careless, the blind, the weak, the wicked from the right path. And though God's will is plain to men of good will; men are often blinded and bound by their own evil past, so that the path of conduct becomes so intricate and perplexed that it is difficult to trace it out. But 'with regard to religion,

¹ I, iii. § 16.

there is no more required than what (men) are well able to do, and what they must be greatly wanting to themselves, if they neglect. And for persons to have that put upon them which they are well able to go through, we naturally consider as an equitable thing, supposing it done by proper authority.¹ On this point, then, the analogy between our experience and the teaching of religion is quite exact.

The fifth chapter deals with life as a discipline. Creatures, men and animals alike, have to function in circumstances for which they are not adapted when born. In maturity, for example, they have to exercise faculties which they have learned or acquired since birth. But they are born with 'faculties' made for enlargement, for the acquirement of experience and habits,² and the former part of life is to be considered as an important opportunity, which Nature puts into our hands, and which, when lost, is not to be recovered.³ The general conduct of Nature is, not to save us trouble or danger, but to make us capable of going through them, and to put it upon us to do so.⁴ (And) our being placed in a state of discipline, throughout this life, for another world, is a providential disposition of things, exactly of the same kind.⁵ Practical habits of virtue are formed and strengthened by repeated acts of virtue,⁶ and this present world is peculiarly fitted to be a state of discipline for our improvement in that character of virtue and piety which is a necessary qualification for the future state.⁷ And though it seems certain that there can be little scope for

¹ I, iv. § 8.

² I, v. § 4.

³ I, v. § 9. As George Tyrrell has said, 'God loves to make things make themselves.'

⁴ I, v. § 21.

⁵ I, v. § 9.

⁶ I, v. § 4.

⁷ I, v. §§ 11, 17.

some virtues in the future life, that e.g., there can be no scope for patience when sorrows shall be no more ; there may nevertheless be need of a temper of mind which shall have been formed by patience.¹

The next chapter (vi) deals with the objections which might be brought, from the point of view of fatalism, against the mere possibility of such a moral government of the universe. The argument from design is as forcible for a fatalist as for a believer in the Divine freedom, just as a house would imply an architect to the determinist and indeterminist alike.² If the will which we find in ourselves, and the character of which we are conscious, be reconcilable with fatalism, the will and character of God are reconcilable with it, and the particular character of benevolence, veracity and justice in Him, as much as any other character.³ And, because the theory of necessity cannot destroy the evidence of our own experience,⁴ it cannot affect our faith that God will reward the righteous and punish the wicked, for it is fact that He governs even brute beasts, by analogous methods.⁵ Butler claims to have shewn that if necessity does not destroy the proof of natural religion, as those Deists contended who denied free-will,⁶ it evidently makes no alteration in the proof of revealed.⁷ But the whole chapter must be read in the light of his dictum ' a man has little pretence to reason who is not sensible that we are all children in speculations of this kind.'⁸

¹ I, v. § 20.

² I, vi. § 3.

³ I, vi. § 8. Butler does not meet the objection that if *necessity* be true, it is impossible that the God who made this world, even though He acted of necessity, can be all-wise, all-good, and all-powerful.

⁴ I, vi. §§ 10 ff.

⁵ I, vi. § 15.

⁶ E.g. Collins.

⁷ I, vi. § 16.

⁸ I, vi. § 6.

This is the main theme of the next Chapter VII of the *government of God, considered as a scheme or constitution, imperfectly comprehended*. This chapter is especially characteristic of Butler, and should be compared with No. XV of the *Sermons at the Rolls* ('On the Ignorance of Man'), and with Chapter IV in Part II of the *Analogy*.¹ God's natural government is a scheme quite beyond our comprehension. Anything whatever may, for aught we know to the contrary, be a necessary condition to any other thing. A man must, really in the literal sense, know nothing at all, who is not sensible of his ignorance in the natural world.² Now, if there be any analogy between the moral and the natural, or if the natural and moral constitution and government of the world can be viewed as so connected as to make up together but one scheme, it becomes credible that God's moral government may be also incomprehensible, and this provides an answer to objections to its justice and goodness. Every act of Divine justice may be supposed to look much beyond itself, and its immediate object. And, if so, we are not able to judge of the whole scheme from the small parts of it which come within our view. Some unknown relation, or some unknown impossibility may render what is objected against, just and good; nay, good in the highest practicable degree.³ Further,⁴ in the natural world, means very undesirable often conduce to ends so desirable as greatly to overbalance the disagreeableness of the means; and it is not reason but experience which shows us that such means are conducive to such ends. By analogy, then, it is credible that our power over each other's happiness, and our liability to sin, may conduce, on the whole, to virtue and happiness. And this appeal

¹ and with I, v. § 1.

² I, vii. § 3.

³ I, vii. § 4.

⁴ I, vii. § 6.

to ignorance cannot be used to *invalidate* the proof of religion, seeing that it is a reminder, not of total but of partial ignorance, and as such is quite valid against any objection against the *means* which God uses to attain His ends.¹

The conclusion to Part I gives a summary account of the whole argument.

Part II of the *Analogy* deals with revealed religion, that is to say, with Christianity. The first chapter deals with the importance of Christianity. It is important, first of all, as a republication of the doctrines of Natural Religion, providence, virtue, and a future judgment. A man convinced of Natural Religion, but shaken by the irreligion around him, would be confirmed by discovering that Revelation asserted what he had believed in, and that its ministers 'proved their commission from God, by making it appear that He had entrusted them with a power of suspending and changing the general laws of nature.'² In other words, prophecy and miracle give additional credibility to a revelation. A visible Church serves the same end of publishing more clearly Natural Religion. It keeps the form of religion before men's eyes, so reminding them of the reality of it; it maintains ordered means for its teaching, by admonition, reproof, instruction, a regular discipline and public religious exercises. The visibility of the Church consists in positive institutions.³

The objections to Christianity on the ground of its abuses, and its little good influence, hold equally against natural religion. And 'the dispensations of Providence are not to be judged by their perversions, but by their genuine tendencies; not by what they actually seem to

¹ I, vii. §§ 9 ff.

² II, i. § 8.

³ II, i. § 10.

effect, but by what they would effect if mankind did their part.' ¹ Reason and revelation alike leave men at full liberty to act as they please, But all Christians are commanded to contribute, by their profession of Christianity, to preserve it in the world.

But Christianity also reveals new truths, not discernible by reason. 'By reason is revealed the relation which God the Father stands in to us. Hence arises the obligation of duty which we are under to Him. In Scripture are revealed the relations which the Son and Holy Spirit stand in to us. Hence arises the obligations of duty which we are under to them.'² Revelation acquaints us with relations we stand in, which we could not otherwise know. To say that Christianity is true means that Christ is indeed the Mediator between God and man, that He is our Saviour, our Lord, and our God.³ If God's Spirit be the renewer of man's corrupt nature, it cannot be a slight matter whether we make use of the divinely appointed means for obtaining this assistance.

Moral is distinguished from positive in religion as follows. We see the reasons for *moral* precepts, we do not see the reason of *positive* precepts. *Moral* duties arise out of the nature of the case, *positive* duties come from external commands. Preference is due to the moral, rather than to the positive in Religion.⁴ *Christian* positive institutions are means to moral ends.⁵

The general law of Scripture and 'express particular declarations' show that nothing can render us accepted

¹ II, i. § 12.

² II, i. § 14.

³ II, i. § 17.

⁴ II, i. § 22.

⁵ II, i. § 24. The emphasis on this is one of the most valuable and positive elements in a Protestantism which is conscious of its own meaning.

of God, without moral virtue. 'But as mankind will place the stress of their Religion anywhere, rather than upon virtue, our Lord Himself 'from Whose command alone the obligation of positive institutions arises' has said, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice.'¹ But because the moral is more important than the positive, we must not forget that the latter is extremely important.

The objections to revelation in general are now considered (Chapter II). The Analogy of Nature does not suggest any prestumption against the general Christian scheme. That things lie beyond the reach of our natural faculties is no kind of presumption against their truth. Neither is the general Christian scheme to be doubted because it is unlike the known course of things. We cannot be certain that the whole course of things is like anything known; and in what is known, we see things unlike one another. And the Christian scheme is not entirely unlike the scheme of Nature.

A primitive revelation is not impossible because it is called miraculous. Miracle is relative to a *course* of Nature, not to beginnings. The revelation is not more miraculous than the creation, and there is no aid to faith in the reduction of the number of miracles. Neither does the Analogy of Nature afford any presumption against a later miraculous revelation. There is presumption against any particular event before proof of it has been offered. Is there any peculiar presumption against miracles? Man's need for supernatural instruction in religion and morality, and for the proof of it, is a sufficient cause for such interposition. Miracles are comparable to *extraordinary* events and forces in Nature.

Chapter III maintains that, upon supposition of a divine revelation, the Analogy of Nature renders it

¹ S. Matt. ix. 13, and xii. 7.

beforehand highly credible, indeed probable, that many things in it must appear liable to great objections; and that we must be incompetent judges of it to a great degree. It is an argument against *a priori* reasoning, and in favour of admitting the evidence of facts. 'I express myself with caution,' Butler says, 'lest I should be mistaken to vilify reason; which is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself.'¹ It is 'the candle of the Lord within us'; but it can afford no light where it does not shine, nor judge, where it has no principles to judge upon.² That which is true must be admitted though it should show us the shortness of our faculties; and that we are in no wise judges of many things, of which we are apt to think ourselves very competent ones. Because Nature is greatly different from what *a priori* we should have expected, it is credible that we shall find Revelation similarly unexpected, and open to objection. So the only question about Christianity is whether it be a real revelation; and concerning the authority of Scripture, whether it be what it claims to be. Christianity can only be over-turned (since there is no objection to the morality of it) if there is no proof of the miracles wrought to attest it; no appearance of anything miraculous in its obtaining in the world, nor of prophecy, i.e. of events foretold which human sagacity could not foresee.³ Internal improbabilities weaken external proof, but we scarce know what are improbabilities as to the matter we are here considering.

There are many resemblances between the light of Nature and Revelation. There are many surprises in natural knowledge; as, for example, that our knowledge of the laws of astronomy is more detailed and

¹ II, iii. § 1.² II, Conclusion, § 2.³ II, iii. § 5.

exact than of medicine. The faculty of invention, in matters of science, is as capricious and irregular as anything in Revelation. And if the 'gifts of the Spirit' are not always confined to those who use them well (cf. 1 Corinthians), it is unfortunately true that many misuse their natural gifts in the same way.¹

Both in Nature and Revelation, though practice is plain and obvious, 'distinct and particular knowledge' requires exact thought and careful consideration, and progress in the understanding of them still continues. The constitution and course of Nature shows us that God does not dispense His gifts according to our notions of the advantage and consequence they would be of to us.² It was argued by the Deists that because revelation is so important (if it be true) for man's salvation, it *must be* certain, perfect, and universal. Butler maintains that not only would the same arguments prove that there *cannot* be sin or disease, but that natural remedies for physical disease, though important for mankind, were unknown for many ages, are known to few now, are easily misused, their success is doubtful, they are not always procurable, and perhaps many valuable ones are still unknown: a striking example of the analogical method. But this facing our limitations is not synonymous with scepticism. That we cannot judge of all things, does not mean that we can judge of nothing. Reason can, and it ought to, judge, not only of the meaning, but also of the morality and the evidence of revelation; not whether it is what we should have expected, but whether it contradicts wisdom, justice, or goodness, 'What the light of Nature teaches us of God.'³

¹ II, iii. § 9.³ II, iii. § 11.² II, iii. § 13.

In Chapter VII, Part I, Butler met objections to the morality of Nature by showing that it is a scheme imperfectly comprehended; now (Part II, Chapter IV) he meets in an analogous way similar objections to the morality of the Christian revelation. — The Christian scheme is only imperfectly comprehended. So much is unrevealed, that for purposes of criticism we know as little of Revelation as we do of Nature. In Revelation, as in Nature, apparently foolish means may be the best for accomplishing desired ends. It is only from analogy that we believe the *whole* of Nature reducible to general laws, and the same analogy makes it credible that miracles may be instances of general laws. These laws are unknown to us, but not more so than many of the laws of Nature.

Particular objections against Christianity may be answered by particular and full analogies in Nature. Butler claims to show that as Christianity and Nature are schemes similar in many respects, it is probable that there would be the like appearance of deficiencies and irregularities in Christianity as in Nature.¹

Chapter V (Part II) aims at shewing that the Analogy of Nature removes all presumption against the general notion of a Mediator. We receive life, and every satisfaction of it, through the instrumentality of others, i.e. God's natural government is carried on through mediators. Not only so, but the bad natural consequences of man's wickedness and folly are sometimes, and to some extent, prevented by the help of others; our own sorrow and amendment are not enough, we need the help of others. It is credible, then, that if we have sinned, our own repentance and amendment will be insufficient of themselves to avert that future

¹ II, iv. § 5.

punishment, all the reasons for which we cannot know; the universal custom of propitiatory sacrifice, indeed, shows that 'the general sense of mankind' feels that a mediator is necessary, in addition to repentance.¹ God's moral government admits of an interposition to pardon. He gave His Son to prevent the destruction of mankind, as He affords particular persons the friendly assistance of their fellow-creatures. Butler is careful to point out that he does not affirm that 'none can have the benefit of the general redemption, but such as have the advantage of being acquainted with it in the present life'.²

Any thoughtful man who looks around him and within will think he has little reason to object against the Scripture account, that man is in a state of degradation. The Scriptures describe Christ's interposition as Mediator under three heads, as Prophet, as Priest and Sacrifice, and as King. Because we are so ignorant, we are not competent to judge, antecedently to revelation, of the necessity for a mediator, or of the whole nature of His office, or of the several parts of which it consists. The objection that God, appointing Christ to suffer for the sins of the world, is indifferent whether He punishes the innocent or the guilty, is met by pointing out that in the daily course of natural providence the innocent suffer for the guilty.³ And Christ's sufferings were voluntary.

'Let reason be kept to, and if any part of the Scripture account of the redemption of the world by Christ can be shown to be really contrary to it, let the Scriptures, in the name of God, be given up; but let not such poor creatures as we are go on objecting against an infinite scheme, that we do not see the necessity, or the

¹ II, v. § 8.

² II, v. § 10, note.

³ II, v. § 21.

usefulness of all its parts, and call this reasoning.' ¹ In Natural Religion, as in Revelation, our duty is made quite plain, however God's ways may remain mysterious. And the Christian precepts are not only positive, but moral. Their reason and value are obvious.

The next chapter (ii. 6) deals with the want of universality in Revelation, and with the supposed deficiency in the proof of it, and with the argument that we cannot suppose it would be left so uncertain, if it were true.

With regard to our temporal interests, we often act, in spite of the great uncertainty and doubtfulness of proof wherein those interests consist. And, in Nature, God does not give the same gift to all who stand equally in need of it. Neither Judaism nor Christianity is universal, and both alike have had different degrees of evidence at different times. 'If we put the case, that for the present, it was intended, revelation should be no more than a small light, in the midst of a world greatly overspread, notwithstanding it, with ignorance and darkness,' ² and that even those most favoured 'have by no means light afforded them to satisfy their curiosity, but only to regulate their life, to teach them their duty, and to encourage them in the careful discharge of it', there is nothing in this doubtfulness and ignorance, and supposed advantage of some compared with others, respecting religion, which is not according to the Analogy of Nature.

And there is no injustice in this, for no more will be required of anyone than what might have been equitably expected of him, from the circumstances in which he was placed (cf. 2 Cor. viii. 12). And even if Revelation were universal, the differences among men,

¹ II, v. § 22.

² II, vi. § 4.

and their different circumstances, would make their religious situations almost as varied as at present.¹ And this uncertainty and these difficulties in the evidence for Revelation give scope for a virtuous use, or vicious misuse, of our understanding. In proportion as we discern the degree of evidence, it ought to influence our practice.²

Considering the infinite importance of religion . . . there is not near so much difference, as is commonly imagined, between what ought in reason to be the rule of life, to those persons who are fully convinced of its truth, and to those who have only a serious doubting apprehension, that it may be true.³

But the evidence of Christianity may have been designedly left so that 'those who are desirous of evading moral obligations should not see it.'⁴

Persons who are capable, not only of talking of, but of really seeing, the objections against Christianity, are also capable of seeing that 'the proof is not lost in these difficulties or destroyed by these objections.'⁵ God does not give us the certain information which some demand, perhaps because religion tests understanding and loyalty.

The seventh chapter deals with the particular evidences for Christianity. These Butler discusses under three heads, miracles, the fulfilment of prophecy, and collateral evidence which makes one argument with the direct evidence. The miracles wrought in attestation of Christianity stand upon the same footing of historical

¹ II, vi. § 7.

² II, vi. § 11. See Dr. Bernard's note *ad. loc.* Cf. Hooker, *Eccl. Pol.*, II, vii. 5; Locke, *Essay*, IV, xix, 1; Hume, *Essay on Miracles*. Contrast, J. H. Newman, *Grammar of Assent*.

³ II, vi. § 9.

⁴ II, vi. § 15

⁵ II, vi. § 16.

evidence as the rest of Scripture; they explain the establishment of Christianity as a religion; and there is no explanation of the general acceptance of the miraculous stories as true so satisfactory as the explanation that they *are* true. Christianity demanded to be accepted on the allegation of miracles publicly wrought to attest its truth.¹ Men received it, on the belief in such miracles, in the age in which those miracles were said to have happened. Since education, prejudice and authority were against Christianity in those days, this is strong evidence for miracles. A person's laying down his life in attestation of certain facts or opinions is the strongest proof of his believing them, and *great numbers* of earnest men gave testimony to what they saw and heard.

The Apostles may have been partly deceivers and partly deceived; but this bare possibility does not alter the fact that in ordinary things we believe human testimony. Men are not deluded by false miracles more often than by other pretences, and the importance of Christianity must have made the first converts less likely to be deceived by carelessness, and it lays them under a greater obligation to veracity.

With regard to the fulfilment of prophecy, the matter of enquiry evidently must be . . . whether the prophecies are applicable to Christ, and to the present state of the world, and of the Church; applicable in such a degree as to imply foresight.² A man may see, in general, that the prophecies of Scripture have been fulfilled to such a degree, as, upon very good ground, to be convinced of foresight more than human in such prophecies, and of such events being intended by them.

¹ II, vii. § 10.

² II, vii. § 26.

The evidence of miracle and prophecy in support of Christianity is strengthened by such considerations as the following. The world's religion and morality are largely due to the acceptance of the historical revelation of which Scripture is the record. This wide acceptance of the Bible is the most conspicuous event in the history of the world. Its claims, therefore, must be most seriously examined. It goes without saying that Butler puts a quite uncritical trust in the historicity of the Old Testament.¹ The fact that a common acceptance of pure natural religion was the very foundation of the Jewish nation seems to confirm the Old Testament miracles,² and the continued separate existence of the Jews, as prophesied, although they are despised throughout the world, requires explanation.³

Such probable proofs as these, by being added, multiply the evidence. And to affect not our judgment, but our conduct in any matter, there is nothing which reason more requires to be taken into account than the importance of the matter.⁴

Chapter VIII deals with the objections against arguing from the analogy of nature to religion. It is said to be a poor thing to solve difficulties in revelation, by saying that there are the same in natural religion. But to want all difficulties removed may be to want to comprehend the Divine Nature, and the whole plan of providence from everlasting to everlasting; and to explain the difficulties in Christianity by analogous difficulties in natural religion is a fair argument against those who accept the latter, and is much better than

¹ See II, vii. § 35.

² II, vii. § 36.

³ II, vii. § 38.

⁴ Cf. Pascal's *Wager Argument*; William James' 'Forced Option' in *The Will to Believe*, pp. 11ff. Also *Analogy*, Intro. § 4. Dr. Bernard's note A.

having no explanation at all. It is said to be a strange way of convincing men of the obligations of religion to show them that they have no more justification for their worldly pursuits. But religion is a matter of practice, and immensely important, and it is a real argument for it to show that men have the same reason to accept it as to take care of their temporal affairs. It is said that to show that the objections against revealed religion also hold against natural providence is a poor way to vindicate the justice and goodness of God. Butler's purpose, however, is not to vindicate God's character, but to show us our duty.¹ He tries to show that the things objected to may, for all we know, not be inconsistent with justice and goodness.

Butler acknowledges that his book is by no means satisfactory. 'But so would any natural institution of life appear, if reduced to a system, together with its evidence.' The evidence on which we have to live is inexpressibly unsatisfactory. But satisfaction, in the sense of having things what they would wish them, 'does not belong to such a creature as man.' 'The question is not at all, whether the evidence of religion is satisfactory, but whether it be, in reason, sufficient to prove and discipline that virtue which it presupposes.'² So it is largely irrelevant to object against his book that men will not forego present interests and pleasures from doubtful evidence of religion. Religion is intended as a trial and exercise of the morality of mankind. His purpose 'is not to enquire what sort of creatures mankind are; but what the light and knowledge, which is afforded them, requires they should be.'³ He has argued from the principles of others, not

¹ II, viii. § 8. Cf. II, v. § 23, and *Rolls Sermons*, xv. § 10.

² II, viii. § 9.

³ II, viii. § 10.

from his own. He has considered religion merely as a question of fact. So Analogy is a real argument, as being an argument from fact.¹

The first of the two *dissertations* appended to the *Analogy* deals with the meaning of that sameness or identity of person implied in all belief in immortality. Personal identity is, indeed, indefinable, but is revealed in consciousness.² But since consciousness of personal identity presupposes, it cannot constitute that identity.³ Consciousness seems inseparable from personality, but memory does not constitute identity.⁴ The identity or sameness of a plant consists in a continuation of the same life.⁵ But personal identity means the sameness of mental substance, not identity of ideas,⁶ and this is implied and revealed by consciousness, and though consciousness may deceive us, it is the only guide we have.⁷

The second dissertation, *Of the Nature of Virtue*, deals with the moral nature, and moral faculties of perception and action, which make man capable of moral government. Man has a capacity of reflecting on actions and approving some and condemning others, whether we call it conscience, moral reason or Divine reason; whether we consider it as a sentiment of the understanding, or as a perception of the heart, or, which seems the truth, as including both. Virtue is what conscience approves, and there is really an universally acknowledged standard of it.⁸ The object of this faculty is actions, and principles on which men would act if they could. It looks to intentions, rather than to consequences, and judges men by what is in their power.⁹ Our discernment of actions as morally good or evil implies a

¹ II, viii. § 13.

² § 2.

³ § 3.

⁴ § 4.

⁵ § 5. ⁶ § 9.

⁷ § 11.

⁸ § 1.

⁹ § 2.

judgment of them as deserving good or ill. Ill desert supposes guilt. Natural and moral evil are associated in the mind.¹ Our perception of good and ill desert is weakened, in former case because motive is doubtful, in latter case because temptation is common and strong.² And the perception of desert depends on the capacities of the agent. What is incongruous, unsuitable, disproportionate, unfit, is vicious.³ Prudence, i.e. a due concern about our own interest and happiness, and a reasonable endeavour to secure and promote it, is virtue. Benevolence is in no sort the whole of virtue. Conscience approves also, for example, gratitude and justice. The happiness of the world is the concern of Him, Who is the Lord and Proprietor of it; we have to pursue it within the bounds of veracity and justice.⁴

(d) *The Six Sermons preached on Public Occasions* belong to the period when Butler was Bishop of Bristol and Dean of St. Paul's. Three of these were 'Charity Sermons' (two for hospitals, and one for charity schools), one for the S.P.G., and two before the House of Lords (one on the anniversary of King Charles I's martyrdom, and the other on that of the accession of George II). His own interest in charity, and in missions, justified his preaching about them.⁵ Some passages reveal the age in which they were preached, and seem strange to-day. He says of slaves, 'If the necessity of the case requires that they may be treated with the utmost rigour that humanity will at all permit, as they' certainly are; and, for our advantage, made as miserable as they well can be in the present world; this surely heightens our obligation to put them into as advantageous a situation as we are able, with regard to another.'⁶ His remarks about

¹ § 3.² § 4.³ § 5.⁴ § 11.⁵ See above, chap. ii, pp. 32, 34.⁶ *Public Sermons*, i. § 8.

the relations of rich and poor hardly commend themselves to this democratic age. As Solomon expresses it in brief, and with much force, 'the rich ruleth over the poor' (Prov. xxii. 7). And this their general intercourse, with the superiority on one hand, and dependence on the other, are in no sort accidental, but arise necessarily from a settled providential disposition of things, for their common good.¹ And later in the same sermon, he says, 'The rich, then, are charged, by natural providence, as much as by revealed appointment, with the care of the poor; not to maintain them idle, which, were it possible they could be so maintained, would produce greater mischiefs than those which charity is to prevent; but to take care, that they maintain themselves by their own labour, or in case they cannot, then to relieve them' (§ 10). Such words as these are the voice of the age in which he lived. It is not fanciful, surely, to see a clearer revelation of Bishop Butler's own mind and character in the passages in which he attacks the sophistries of those who neglect the obligations of charity. 'Why,' he asks, 'should people be so extremely apprehensive of the danger that poor persons will make a perverse use of even the least advantage, even the being able to read, while they do not appear at all apprehensive of the like danger for themselves or their own children, in respect of riches or power, how much so ever?'² And in the sermon for the London Infirmary, he says: 'Persons of too severe tempers can . . . talk of the ill-deserts of the poor, the good uses they might make of being let to suffer more than they do, under distresses which they bring upon themselves, or however might, by diligence and frugality, provide against; and the idle uses they may make of knowing beforehand that they shall be

¹ *Public Sermons*, ii. § 6.

² *Ibid.*, iv. § 10.

relieved in case of those distresses. Indeed, there is such a thing as a prejudice against them, arising from their very state of poverty, which ought greatly to be guarded against. . . . We should be forward not only to admit and encourage the good deserts of such as do well, but likewise as to those of them who do not, be ever ready to make due allowance for their bad education, or, which is the same, their having had none ; for what may be owing to the ill example of their superiors, as well as companions, and for temptations of all kinds. And remember always, that be men's vices what they will, they have not forfeited their claim to relief under necessities, till they have forfeited their lives to justice.'¹

The sermon on the Martyrdom of King Charles discusses the nature of liberty. It is, he holds, a progressive state ; ' and the perfection of it, whether attainable in this world or not, consists in that " perfect love " ' (1 John iv. 18) which, as it implies an entire coincidence of our wills with the will of God, must be a state of the most absolute freedom, in the most literal and proper sense.² He speaks with wise sanity of the severity and difficulty of civil liberty, which implies authority and obedience in the very notion of it.³ And anyone who recalls the Orange Books, Grey Books, White Books, and Blue Books, with which the warring governments in 1914 sought to justify themselves before the conscience of the world, will recognize the truth of Butler's dictum, ' Tyranny, and faction so friendly to it . . . and unjust wars, and persecutions, by which the earth has been laid waste ; all this has all along been carried on with pretences of truth, right, general good. So it is, men cannot find it in their heart to join in such

¹ *Public Sermons*, vi. §§ 8-10.

² *Ibid.*, iii. § 3.

³ § 17.

things, without such honest words to be the bond of union, though they know among themselves, that they are only words, and often though they know, that everybody else knows it too.¹

The sermon on the Anniversary of the King's Accession deals with the British Constitution, especially from the religious and ecclesiastical standpoint; seeing in England an establishment of religion which must be interpreted by the fact that it tolerates those who conscientiously differ from it. 'A religious establishment without a toleration of such as think they cannot in conscience conform to it, is itself a general tyranny; because it claims absolute authority over conscience.'² . . . 'But our religious establishment . . . desires not to keep persons in its communion, or gain proselytes to it, by any other methods than the Christian ones of argument and conviction.'³ The establishment of a pure and reformed religion in this land is a providential protection against the superstitions of Rome,⁴ but as 'we have discarded many burdensome ceremonies; let us be the more careful to cultivate inward religion. . . . Thus our lives will justify and recommend the Reformation; and we shall 'act on the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.'⁵ (Titus ii. 10.)

(e) *The Charge at Durham*.—Bishop Butler delivered his primary Charge to the clergy of his Diocese of Durham in 1751. Its main subject is the value and use of external religion, and it afforded opportunity for the attack already referred to.⁶

¹ § 11.

² *Public Sermons*, v. § 6.

³ § 8. There were penal codes, at that time, against Roman Catholics in England and Ireland, against Episcopalians in Scotland, and against Unitarians!

⁴ § 7.

⁵ § 13.

⁶ Chapter ii, p. 32.

The Charge begins with a lament over the decay of religion in the nation in an age whose 'deplorable distinction' was 'an avowed scorn of religion in some, and a growing disregard to it in the generality'. But the standing business of the clergy is to revive the declining spirit of religion in the body of the people, and this can best be done by so keeping up 'the form and face of religion' among them with decency and reverence, as to make the form 'more and more subservient to promote the reality and power of it'.¹ Even the public observance of religion, reduced to a minimum by the Reformers, was to a great part generally neglected; 'for instance, the service of the Church, not only upon common days, but also upon saints' days; and several other things might be mentioned. Thus they have no customary admonition, no public call to recollect the thoughts of God and religion from one Sunday to another'.² The importance of external religion implies a proper regard to the structures which are consecrated to the service of God,³ and also means that 'the service of the Church ought to be celebrated as often as you can have a congregation to attend it'.⁴ But as it is difficult for people in rural districts to attend church regularly on week-days, 'family prayers, regularly kept up in every house, would have a great and good effect'.⁵ Frequent secret prayer, grace at meals, teaching children their prayers and catechism, and the adoption of a detailed rule of life, prudently recommended, would have an influence upon the people.⁶ These things may be called 'form,' but the form of religion may be used to promote the 'power' of it. 'If . . . persons would accustom themselves to be thus admonished (to devote

¹ § 8.² § 9.³ § 11.⁴ § 14.⁵ § 15.⁶ §§ 16-19.

themselves to God's service) by the very sight of a Church, could it be called superstition?' The work of Christ for us is 'not to supersede our own endeavours, but to render them effectual'. 'The greater festivals of the Church . . . of course lead you to . . . show the Christian practice which arises out of them.'¹ It is the duty of a minister to prepare as many as he can to be confirmed, and he should also talk privately to the communicants in his parish upon the nature and benefits of the Sacraments.² It is difficult for the clergy to do their duty, but they must not make undue excuses for themselves.³ They must give themselves wholly to these things, which are the particular business of those who live by the Gospel.⁴ For the securest barrier against the efforts of infidelity is reviving a practical sense of religion among the people.⁵

It is interesting that Durham Cathedral, in which this Charge was delivered, retained by traditional custom, during the eighteenth century, a higher ceremonial than existed elsewhere.⁶ Ralph Thoresby was 'troubled' to see there, among other 'superstitions', 'richly embroidered I. H. S. upon the high altar', and many 'tapers' there also.⁷ At Durham copes were regularly used at the Altar until long after Butler's day. Defoe had described them as 'rich with embroidery and embossed work of silver, that indeed it was a kind of load to stand under them'. Their use does not seem to have been discontinued until 1784.⁸ It is noteworthy that

¹ § 20.² § 21.³ § 22.⁴ § 23.⁵ § 24, i, p. 301.⁶ Abbey and Overton, *English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, ii, p. 430.⁷ Ralph Thoresby, *Correspondence and Diary*, i. 60; ii. 384..⁸ See Abbey and Overton, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 467, and the references there given.

this 'highest' of Cathedrals was unique in the eighteenth century for its hold on the affection of the people. Defoe in 1728 found a congregation of five hundred at the six o'clock morning service.¹

(f) *Fragments*.—When Bishop Butler died, he left a direction that all his papers should be destroyed, and he seems to have been obeyed. Practically nothing of his work has been discovered beyond what was published before his death. All that has been found since was published by Dr. Steere, a fragment of the Fourth Charge he delivered to the clergy at Bristol (published in 1862), and a few fragments preserved in the Bishop's handwriting in the British Museum (published in 1853).² The fragment of the *Charge* deals with the visitation of the sick. Leaving men to die without religious admonition, helps to separate the ideas of Death and Religion. If men have led bad lives, it is not indifferent how they may die, and we know not how important it may be. And visitation of the sick is as necessary with a view to their recovery as to their death, that they may use their restored health better.

The fragments are nineteen short disconnected paragraphs. The most characteristic, perhaps, are: 'Good men surely are not treated in this world as they deserve, yet 'tis very seldom their goodness which makes them disliked, even in cases where it may seem to be so; but 'tis some behaviour or other, which however excusable, perhaps infinitely overbalanced by their virtues, yet is offensive, possibly wrong, however such, it may be, as would pass off very well in a man of the world.' (9).

¹ Walcot's *Cathedrals*, 101. Quoted in Abbey and Overton, *op. cit.*, ii, 487.

² See Butler's *Works*, Dr. Bernard's Edition, i, pp. 302, 305, and editor's notes.

“ Instead of deluding oneself in imagining we should behave well in times and circumstances other than those in which one is placed, to take care and be faithful and behave well in those one is placed in.’ (18).

CHAPTER IV

THE PERMANENT ELEMENT IN THE WORKS OF BISHOP BUTLER

BISHOP BUTLER'S books are not easy to read. The people are rare who, like the 'Student in Arms', can read the *Analogy* and be thoroughly interested, and retain a good idea of it at the end.¹ In a letter to his sister, Mr. Hankey indicates the variations in his health and feelings on a sea voyage by a catalogue of the books he reads. 'Friday morning. Full of buck. *Tartarin sur les Alpes*. . . . Saturday morning. Very depressed. *Pickwick Papers*. Sunday morning. Quite well, thank you! *Butler's Analogy*. As a guide I may point out that *Pickwick* cheers me up when I am most depressed, while Butler's *Analogy* takes all my strength.'² Butler's style was careful, even scrupulous, almost laboured. He aimed at no felicity nor ornament in writing, but only to be intelligible.³ Bagehot has pointed out that he has no apparent delight in composition. In an age when men thought that nothing was true which could not be proved in a coffee-house argument, and when the worship of a facile common sense meant often that writing was clear because it was not very profound, Butler had more to say than he knew how to say, and pressed into one crowded volume the detailed statement

¹ *Letters of Donald Hankey*, p. 18, Melrose, 1919.

² *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³ Butler-Clarke Correspondence, second letter. *Works*, i., p. 319.

of a whole new philosophy of God and man and nature, the characteristic quality of which comes, in part at least, from emphasizing the limitations of reasoning, and giving to each particle of evidence no more weight, and no less, than it ought to have. Every protest against an established intellectualism or rationalism labours at the disadvantage that the opposing case can be stated more clearly than its own. Butler had the additional handicap that he was born in the generation which had seen the final disappearance in England of scholasticism, with its system of accurate and detailed definitions. He was compelled to write, though of the most real and valuable subjects, in the language of 'common sense'. There is no wonder if the argument is sometimes difficult. He is not to be blamed if he has not the genius of Berkeley and Hume for attractive statement, and at least he avoids the subtle fallacy of confusing similar, but slightly different, meanings of the same word, which makes Hume's scepticism so plausible. His sentences are sometimes burdened with qualifications, because he will say no more, and no less, than he means. He will not let an argument appear stronger than he believes it to be. He allows full weight to all objections; he never hides a weak spot with rhetoric; he states the things as he believes it to be, and leaves it to make the impression it ought to make.

Butler lived in an age when poetry and faith and gratitude and joy played a small part in men's religion; they seemed to value it rather as a means of bringing fear to bolster up an uninspiring morality. Bagehot, indeed, has asserted that there is nothing of poetic religion in Butler, and that nobody could tell from his writings that the universe is beautiful. The

sacramentalism of nature, however, which is implied in the whole argument of the *Analogy*, relates his vision of the world to that of the poets, and no less an authority than Dr. H. S. Holland has said that passages of the *Analogy* (e.g. II, chap. iv, § 16) are 'in direct touch with the poets of high vision'.¹ But few people find the *Sermons* or the *Analogy* exhilarating reading, if only because the 'moral grandeur' of the great Bishop's intellectual thoroughness, shocked by the flimsy optimism of the Deists in a sinful and irreligious age, forces them to face the depth and universality of human depravity.

No one can understand Butler's contribution to English religion who does not bring to the task bravery, candour, a high seriousness, and a disciplined intellect. Smaller men have been more popular because they make less demand on their readers. John Wesley writes in his journal on May 18, 1768, at Alnwick, 'I went on in reading that fine book, Bishop Butler's *Analogy*! But I doubt it is too hard for most of those for whom it is chiefly intended. *Free-thinkers*, so called, are seldom *close thinkers*. They will not be at the pains of reading such a book as this. One that would profit them must dilute his sense, or they will neither swallow nor digest it.' And along with this difficulty of his books, another characteristic of Butler helped to bring about the curious result that the *Analogy*, though it was widely read, was neither attacked nor defended in the age to which it belongs. The ordinary orthodox Christian apologists claimed that they defended Christianity by arguments so plain and coercive that only the wilfully blind could fail to be convinced by them. They could not believe in the sincerity of their

¹ Romanes Lecture (1908) on *The Optimism of Bishop Butler*, p. 15.

opponents. And therefore they could not but look coldly on one who admitted that, at its best, the argument for Christianity rests on probabilities, and that a complete and satisfactory answer to all reasonable difficulties is not to be expected. In temper and aims he was not more opposed to the Deists than to the defenders of the faith, who would prove that God exists as clearly and undeniably as they would prove that the angles of a triangle equal two right angles. He fought according to rules of his own making, and all the other gladiators were helpless, as though they had leaned against a wall that was not there.

This strange silence of Butler's contemporaries is nowhere more marked than in Germany. The theologians of the 'Enlightenment' owed much less to the French negative writers, Voltaire and Rousseau, than later German historians of thought have imagined. They were almost as much indebted to the English Deists and their orthodox opponents as the English theologians of the last fifty years were to German scholarship. Many books were translated, including the bulky *Credibility of the Gospels*, by Butler's school-fellow, N. Lardner. Almost every theological work published in England was reviewed in Germany; the almost solitary exception is Butler. From his own day to this German thinkers hardly ever mention his name.¹ All this is true of Kant. He knows his indebtedness to Rousseau and to Hume, and he read Shaftesbury and Hutcheson and Adam Smith. He never acknowledges any indebtedness to Butler. But, whether the debt was direct or indirect, the dependence upon Butler of many

¹ That Butler hid a treatise on Christian Ethics under the title, *Fifteen Sermons preached at the Rolls Chapel*, does not explain the neglect of the *Analogy*.

of the characteristic positions of the Critical Philosophy is indubitable. Kant is closer to Butler than to any other influence at that time in the world. The similarity of Kant's Categorical Imperative to Butler's Infallible Conscience is obvious. The doctrine of the *Dissertation on Virtue* that the object of the moral faculty is actions, and the principles on which men would act if they could, looking to intentions rather than to consequences, approximates very closely to Kant's affirmation that a good will is the only unconditional good. Kant, in the earliest form of his ethical teaching (in the *Critique of Pure Reason*) defines duty as the necessity of acting from respect for the law of reason. But this can only mean respect for the true self whose end the law commands. 'Self-love' and 'reason', then, for both Kant and Butler, are the two foundations of morality. Some writers see in Kant's trust to the Practical Reason, in those interests of faith which Pure Reason fails to prove, a restatement of Butler's doctrine of probability.¹ Lord Acton points out that although Newman was not really interested in the pedigree of ideas, towards the end of his career he brought the study of Butler, whom he had read in early life, into conjunction with what he learned from Kant, whom he only got to know very late.

The fact that Butler brings together self-love and conscience as the supreme principles of human nature is exceedingly important, in part because it helps to make clear what he meant by the former principle,² but also because it helps to make clear the important place which

¹ Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, p. 366. Lord Acton's *Correspondence*, vol. i, pp. 79, 80, 225, 226, etc.

² See below, p. 116. There must be some consciousness of the higher ideal self in his use of the term.

Butler holds in the genealogy of those ideas of 'value' or 'worth,' especially the absolute value of the true individual, which are so much stressed in modern philosophy. When we place side by side the doctrines of probability and of the infallible conscience we see life as a courageous adventure based on the intuitions of a free Soul. As Dr. H. S. Holland has pointed out, the doctrine of 'probability' really means that the active choice of the religious man, the 'will to believe' and to stake all on one's belief is a main element of religious conviction. The experience, the revelation, the evidence of Scripture and history, the authority of the Church, all these at best make up 'probability' until the man himself affirms them and makes them a living certainty.¹ This is what is most vital in the modern revolt against the theory that logic is a sufficient measure of the universe, which is derived, through William James and Eucken, Earl Balfour and Albrecht Ritschl, Lotze and Herbart, from Kant and Butler.²

In common with the general practice of the eighteenth century, Butler means by the word Reason the working of the intellect of an individual man, according to the generally recognized laws of formal logic, starting from given premises, and proceeding to its conclusion unchecked by any reference either to the experience of the individual or the history of the race. It is, indeed, placed as distinctly in contrast to experience as it is to revelation³ and there is, of course, not the least idea that reason, in this sense of the word, is not a fixed thing, unchanging through the centuries, but is the product of evolution, the result of causes some of which are themselves not

¹ *Our Place in Christendom*, 1916, p. 160.

² Otto Ritschl, *Ueber Werthurtheile*, Leipzig, 1895, pp. 1-13.

³ *Analogy*, I, 7, § 16.

rational, and like every other human faculty must be judged by its survival value, as a weapon in the struggle for existence. The most perfect illustrations of this 'Pure Reason' are the mathematical sciences. Butler values Reason very highly. 'It is the Candle of the Lord within us¹ and is the only faculty wherewith we can judge anything, including revelation itself.² It ought to judge the meaning, as well as the morality, of what claims to be the revelation of God.³ Butler had himself hoped to prove conclusively and satisfactorily, by these methods, the truth of God's existence, but gave up the attempt.⁴ Butler holds that revelation brings us information which reasoning by itself could not discover⁵ and considering the limitations of reason, he submits it to the guidance of God⁶ but his chief emphasis, both in theology and in ethics, is on the importance of experience. He sits at the feet of the facts. He tells us not what must be, nor what ought to be, but reminds us of what is.⁷ God has made the world as He has made it, not as men might imagine that He ought to have made it. Those who would know His will, and their own duty, can only find it by observing what He has done, and how He acts, and the circumstances in which He has actually placed them.

¹ *Analogy*, II, concl., § 2.

² *Ibid.*, II, 3, § 1. Cf. Illingworth, *Reason and Revelation*, p. 21.

³ *Ibid.*, II, 3, § 13.

⁴ Clarke Correspondence. *Works*, vol. i, p. 311. His friend, Dr. Clarke, was a prominent example of this *a priori* method in theology.

⁵ *Ibid.*, II, i. § 14.

⁶ *Fragments*, 13. *Works*, vol. i, p. 307.

⁷ *Rolls Sermons*, Preface, §§ 12, 13. *Analogy*, Introduction, §§ 9, 11. 1.3 §§ 28, 29; 6. § 15. II, 8. § 11.

Men cannot be certain. Whether they like it or not, they are creatures of limited faculties, ignorant of many things, set amid much mystery to live their life and do their duty in an infinite and incomprehensible universe. It even seems as though revelation is given them to be 'no more than a small light, in the midst of a world greatly overspread, notwithstanding it, with ignorance and darkness.' ¹ They cannot confirm their hopes, ideals, and intuitions with a proof, logically irrefragable and intellectually satisfactory, like Euclid's proof of the fifth proposition of his first book. They must be satisfied with probable evidence, in religion as elsewhere, for probability is the guide of life. ²

Since Butler's day the word probability has been so widely used, and in particular to describe an important theory in mathematics, that to the modern reader his use of it must seem a little ambiguous. Butler uses the word to describe that kind of evidence which comes from examining our own experience, and the testimony of others, and observing the similarities or differences which occur. That an event has occurred or will occur seems more or less probable according to its greater or less similarity to some other event which has occurred. ³ This is the only kind of proof which such ignorant and imperfect creatures as we are, in such a vast, incomprehensible, and mysterious universe as we are placed in, have on any matter. An infinite and perfect intelligence would know all things completely as they are, without any hesitation or doubt. But our limited faculties mean that we have to be content to 'know in part'. We cannot comprehend the infinite, and to claim to do so is to claim omniscience. As Anatole France has said, to

¹ *Analogy*, ii. 6, § 4.

² *Ibid.*, Introduction, § 3.

³ *Ibid.*, Introduction, § 2.

create the universe is less impossible than to understand it. And the Deists who argued that because God is perfect, and human nature is everywhere the same, therefore revelation *must* be something which Christianity plainly is not, forgot that the question in dispute was not whether they were God, but whether Christianity was true. Indeed, as a class, the Deists seem quite confident of their own infallibility ; and sometimes write as though they had been present when God created the world, and knew exactly and in detail how and why He did it. Butler was more modest. He never forgot that we live on the earth, and that it is part of our discipline that the evidence for the truths of religion is not complete and demonstrative and ' satisfactory '. The proper end of life does not seem, he tells us, to be the acquisition of knowledge ; our ignorance and ' the shallowness of our reason ' make this earthly life a school of submission to the will of God.¹ He does not himself doubt, but he sees the reasons which almost justify the doubts of others ; he knows how difficult it is to prove religion to them, and it is his merit that he dares to admit that the proof is less than certain. The change that he made in apologetics, from the religion of a God who is the conclusion of an argument, to the worship of the real God of the actual world, made known in a historical revelation, was so great as to be, without exaggeration, a revolution. He took up from Pascal, and handed on to Kant and Newman and Herbert Spencer, the work of showing that there has not been given to men an intellectually coercive, *a priori*, demonstration of God's existence, and that probable evidence is all that we can have in religion, but that it is sufficient. This is a permanent achievement, and

¹ *Rolls Sermons*, xv. §§ 9, 10. *Analogy*, ii. 6, §§ 12, 13,

puts the whole case for religion on a broader, more impregnable, basis.

A knowledge of God so clear and indubitable that there could be no excuse for not accepting it would be valued no more than any other platitude; what all can have, none will make any sacrifice for;¹ what none can doubt, no one will be at the trouble to defend. But the knowledge of the will of the God who made the real world, which has to be won by a watchful and receptive submission to the actual happenings of life as it meets us day by day, by a faithful achievement of the duty which His daily providence puts into our hand, and by a loyal self-devotion to the divine purpose which an enlightened conscience recognizes in human history, will be valued at the price men have to pay for it. In the spiritual world, what costs little is worth little. The knowledge which is difficult and scarce, won by patience and sincerity and a humble subjection of theories to fact, is infinitely precious. That it is but a little light in a great darkness makes it the more valuable—for it is all men have to walk by. If a man were obliged to take a journey by night, would he not 'give heed to' any 'light shining in the darkness, till the day should break and the day-star arise'?² Such knowledge makes men at once confident and modest, slow to make assertions, but more slow to deny the assertions of others, conscious of their ignorance, reverent before the mystery of life; their faith is a direction, a growing insight into duty, an increasing fellowship with the God of things as they are.

¹ Cf. Browning, *Bishop Blougram's Apology*.

² *Rolls Sermons*, xv. § 14.

Because religion is intercourse with the Infinite, mystery is of its very essence. God is incomprehensible. 'Where there is no mystery, there is no God.' Our truest thoughts about absolute and eternal things are only shadows cast by God's light as it struggles through the thick fog of human minds.¹ Man cannot worship what he can understand, and therefore a logically complete and convincing proof of God would destroy the faith it proves. Religion is bound up with the sense that reality eludes the measure of our puny reason, that there is more than we can grasp or understand. If we poor little men could understand everything, there would be no need of God.² It is of the weakness of human nature that most people want to be certain; they seek the 'impregnable rock' of external infallibilities; they would be glad if God could be proved; if they knew the details of heaven; if there could be no possible difference about right and wrong. But the world is not made on that plan. There is enough light to see the next step. And it should comfort us to realize that the Mind which meets us in the universe is greater than our own, and yet, by shutting us up not to certainty but to probability, challenges us to grow, by adventure, towards His likeness.

And so I live, you see
 Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
 Prefer; still struggling to effect
 My warfare; happy that I can
 Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
 Not left in God's contempt apart
 With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
 Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.³

¹ Tyrrell, *Letters*, p. 32.

² *Letters of Donald Hankey*, p. 49.

³ Browning, *Christmas Eve and Easter Day*, xxxiii.

The great strength of Butler's view of religion is that he is able to show that all life partakes of the same conditions. Certainty, as distinct from probability, greater or less, is not met with here below. Men cannot be sure what the result of their actions will be; what are the best aims to set before themselves or others; of things in themselves good, which are impossible and which are not; and which are the best means to attain the ends they have chosen. Even in the most important things in life, we have to be content with probability. The decisions which men make and act on every day, in affairs of state, in their own business transactions, in the education of their children, in buying a picture or a racehorse, in choosing a secretary or a gardener, are based on evidence which is far from justifying anything like certainty. Bishop Creighton wrote once:—'People's ideas about the nature of evidence are very vague. One of my clergy told me that he was at dinner with an eminent lawyer who said, "I go to Church and bring up my children as Christians; but I am bound to say there is not so much evidence for it as would hang a man." But the evidence necessary to hang a man is far beyond that on which we act for any practical venture of our own. Did he have as much evidence of the character of his wife before he married her as would suffice to hang a man?'¹ This argument of Creighton's does not touch the root of the matter. The legal trust in 'evidence' rests on assumptions which are unproved, but not disputed; the case for religion involves unprovable assumptions which are in fact disputed. Butler's contribution to the subject is that he shows that everyday life is built on the *same* unprovable, disputed assumptions. There are, indeed,

¹ *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, ii. p. 105.

numberless instances in which men hold opinions with a strength out of all proportion to the reasons or the evidence which can be adduced for them, and make attempts, and with the approbation of the shrewd and the prudent, though a strict regard for evidence would make it appear probable that they would not succeed.¹ Even if Christianity were a forlorn hope, it would not be the only forlorn hope in the world.

Probable evidence, indeed, may be very strong; sometimes so strong that it hangs a man. Especially is it noteworthy that several different lines of probable evidence, added together, multiply the evidence.² What is commonly called 'moral certainty' is only one example of probability. The overwhelming majority of mankind are convinced that there is an actually existing 'external world', that the universe is more than a dream which I dream in private, and that other persons as well as things have a real existence, independent of my thoughts or fancies. But no logically complete proof has ever been offered of this datum of all thought and experience. All argument about this actually existing external world assumes that it is rational, that is, that the laws of logic, the principles of the mind's working, apply to 'things'. It is impossible to *think* of two things occupying the same space at the same time; and we assume that therefore two things cannot occupy the same space at the same time. But the complete rationality of the universe has never been demonstrated. Similarly, the principle of the 'Uniformity of Nature' is unproved; so is evolution. All these, the groundwork of modern science, as well as such 'common-sense' assumptions as the validity of memory, rest on that same foundation of probability

¹ *Analogy*, ii. 6, § 3. ² *Ibid.*, ii. 7 § 43.

which Butler claims to be the only, but the sufficient, ground of faith. 'Religion is at any rate no worse off than science in the matter of proof.' It cannot be proved that people suffering from incurable diseases, or from old age, should not be put out of their misery. The ultimate moral, spiritual, and social conceptions on which life is based have no other foundation than the two pillars of Butler's apologetic, probability and conscience.¹ If Butler is wrong when he maintains that probability is a sufficient foundation on which to build Christianity, then there is no reason for science, for ethics, or for any of the confidence with which people go about the practical affairs of life.

The works of Bishop Butler force one to face the fact that faith is built on a kind of agnosticism. It is literally true that faith is lost in sight. It is because faith is rooted in difficulties solved and doubts conquered, that it can overcome the world. Butler constantly reminds his readers that the fact that the evidence for Christianity is doubtful does not prove that Christianity is not true. The thorough-going agnostic does not know whether there is a God or not. In other words, there is, for him, as much reason for believing in God as for not believing in Him; there is an even chance that God exists. And even if there be no stronger evidence for religion than this, the infinite importance of the issues would force us to act as though it may be true.²

Butler asserts the probability of the various truths of natural and revealed religion by pointing out the similarities, greater or less, between what happens in our natural experience and what is taught by religion. So, arguing from the more known, he meets objections

¹ *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, ii, pp. 211-2.

² Cf. above, chap. iii, p. 69.

against the less known. This is the method of analogy. If there is a likeness between that system of things of which religion informs us, and our experience of the natural world, this tends to answer those who say that religion cannot be from God, because of this or that objection, when they can be shown exactly parallel difficulties in nature, which is acknowledged to be His workmanship.¹ The whole argument is *ad hominem*; he meets his opponents on their own ground, and starts by assuming what they hold to be true.² Thus, he argues that the principles of the fatalist do not destroy the force, for him, of the 'argument from design' for the being of God, because a man who saw a house would agree that it was built by an architect, whether he believed that the architect built it necessarily or freely.³ Many of Butler's particular arguments from the *Analogy of Nature* have been noticed in the previous chapter.⁴ Here it is enough to examine the validity of the method, as such, and the objections which have been raised against it. Is Butler's argument a sound defence of religion against its critics, and, in any sense, a permanent contribution to thought? What he has attempted is to compare the known constitution and course of things with what were, in his day, the accepted commonplaces of 'natural religion', the acknowledged dispensation of Providence, with what religion teaches us to believe and expect; and to show that they are analogous and of a piece, one system governed by the same general laws, and implying the same Divine character.¹ When we sit down in 'a cool hour', does the argument convince us?

¹ *Analogy*, Introduction, § 6. This argument can be so stated as to avoid the assumption of an 'Author of Nature'.

² *Ibid*, ii. 8, § 11. ³ *Ibid*, I. vi. § 3. ⁴ See above, pp. 55, 63.

Sir Humphrey Davy called *Analogy* 'the fruitful parent of error', and the older logicians were scornful of it. The illustration which one writer gives of the method is this:—The growing size of London bodes evil to England, because London is the heart of England, and a swollen heart is a sign of disease.² Analogy, as some writers use it, is almost indistinguishable from logic growing out of a metaphor, and means a world in which everything is so like everything else, that nothing is itself, Barry Pain's world in which

' All things are mixed and run into each other
In a violet twilight of virtues and sins,
With the church-spires below you and no one to show
you,
Where the curate leaves off and the pew-rent begins ! ' ³

An Italian professor used analogy with much force and completeness to prove that Galileo's recently-discovered satellites of Jupiter could not exist. Analogy shows that there must be seven planets. There are seven windows given to animals in the domicile of the head, two nostrils, two eyes, two ears and a mouth. So in the macrocosm there are two favourable stars, two unfavourable, two luminaries, and Mercury. There are seven metals. The Jews and other ancient nations have divided the week into seven days, and have named them after the seven planets. If we increase the number of the planets, this whole and beautiful system falls to the ground.⁴ Obviously, there is danger in

¹ *Analogy*, Introduction, § 11.

² Alfred Sidgwick, *Fallacies*, London, 1883, p. 174.

³ Quoted by A. E. Heath, *On Analogy*, Cambridge Magazine, March 2, 1918.

⁴ Review, in the *New Statesman*, of *Studies in the History and Method of Science*.

using analogy. Unless the similarities which are the basis of argument are relevant, and unless the reasoning is checked by experiment, the road lies open to the madness of Mr. Chesterton's debater who proved that because man has two ears, and two eyes, and two arms, therefore he must have two hearts.

Butler is modest in his use of the method. He does not attempt more than to answer objections against beliefs accepted on other grounds, such as revelation or common-sense or 'Natural Reason', or to show that Christianity is not ridiculous.¹ So he does not attempt to prove by analogy that men are immortal, but only to show, from our experience, that the objections to the possibility of immortality are invalid.² Certainly whatever other objection to Butler's work may hold, no one could apply to him the assertion, 'The argument from analogy is . . . not so much a mode of attempting proof as a mode of attempting to dispense with the serious labour of proving.'³ So far is Butler from thinking he has proved what he has not proved, that he emphasizes the unsatisfactoriness of his achievement. He is almost unique amongst theological disputants in admitting all the strength of the objections to Christianity, and facing the fact that the case for it is vague, and incomplete, and not entirely conclusive.⁴ So far is he from claiming to know what he does not know, that few things are more characteristic of his writing than his reiterated emphasis on human ignorance. We do not know enough about God's universe, and His purposes in it, to be able to use some of the arguments which anti-Christians urge against the faith.⁵ This argument from ignorance is

¹ *Analogy*, Introduction, § 12.

² *Ibid.*, i. 1.

³ A. Sidgwick, *op. cit.*, p. 232

⁴ *Analogy*, ii. 8, § 9.

⁵ *Rolls Sermons*, XV. *Analogy*, I, vii. § ii. 4.

the occasion of a very successful parody of the tone and method of the *Analogy*, by Samuel Butler, in the chapters entitled 'The Book of the Machines' in *Erewhon*.¹ The chapters are an account of the evolution of machines, relatively much more rapid than that of human beings, and of the justifiable fear that they will overthrow humanity, and take its place as rulers of the world's progress. 'See how easy it is to be plausible,' Samuel Butler wrote to Darwin on May 11, 1872, 'and what absurd propositions can be defended by a little ingenuity and distortion and departure from strict scientific methods.'² It is true; but it is a fact that we are ignorant of many things, and that our ignorance makes it impossible to deny some things which some negative thinkers have denied, or to legislate for the universe with the lighthearted infallibility of the Deists and of some of their modern successors. It was one of Butler's merits in an over-logical age that he emphasized man's ignorance, and the room that it left for some of his deepest hopes and fears.

The older logicians restricted the usefulness of analogy to its power to suggest new lines of investigation. J. S. Mill³ speaks of analogical reasoning as a 'mere guide-post.' Sigwart connects it with that happy power of divination without which thought, compelled to function according to strict method, would be condemned to complete stagnation, and, like Professor Welton, emphasizes the importance of analogy as the chief means of discovery.⁴ A historically later account of analogy described it as 'imperfect induction', an inference 'on

¹ First Edition, 1872.

² *Samuel Butler, A Memoir*. By H. Festing Jones, i, p. 156.

³ *System of Logic*. Bk. III. Chapter XX.

⁴ Sigwart, *Logic*, II, 213, 242. Welton, *Manual of Logic*, II, Chapter 3.

the basis of partial identity.' The universe has *some* of the properties of a watch, therefore it probably possesses some other property of the watch. Analogy also differs from induction in that it draws attention away from the *number* of observed instances to their *character*, and its success depends on the clearness with which the reasoner distinguishes between those resemblances which are essential, and those non-essential, for the purposes of his argument.¹ According to this theory analogy is a legitimate but very dangerous method of argument, and men who run easily to vivid metaphorical language may appear to have conquered more land than they have really occupied.

The latest logic seems to hold that analogy is a completely valid method of reasoning, and is the basis of much that is most fundamental in mathematics. Algebra expresses the analogy between 9×7 and $6 \times \frac{3}{2}$ and 21×43 in the expression $x \times y$, where x and y are any numbers. Cartesian geometry makes use of the analogy between algebra and geometry. 'In fact all applications of mathematics to science depend on the analogy between natural phenomena and some calculus.'² The theories of matter, explaining it in terms of vortices or stresses or 'electric charges', associated with the names of Kelvin and Osborn Reynolds and J. J. Thomson, rest upon the analogy between the results of the working of some imaginary model and the observed phenomena of nature. Many of the 'discoveries' of modern science are inventions rather than discoveries, and their importance rests entirely on analogy.³ All logical argument comes

¹ M. L. Asheley, in *Studies in Logical Theory*, pp. 172, 177.

² Cf. the work of Helmholtz, Mach, and L. Poincaré.

³ A. E. Heath, *On Analogy*, *Cambridge Magazine*, March 2, 1918.

back, in the last resort, to analogy, and has no more validity than analogy. Induction is the arguing from a number of observed cases to a general law; and deduction is the opposite process of applying a general law to particular cases. But no two particular cases are exactly and in all respects the same, or they would be, not two, but one. They are 'like', and are treated as identical by overlooking differences considered unimportant for the particular purpose. Hence every argument from 'case' to 'case', all induction and all deduction, rests upon analogy, and is valid according as the similarities noted, and the differences ignored, are relevant to the matter in hand.¹

Butler's use of this method is, in any case, logically unexceptionable. He meets the objection against Revelation, that it cannot come from God because it has certain characteristics, by shewing that our ordinary natural experience has the same characteristics. He shews that the claims and assertions of religion are 'credible', because the feelings or prejudices or ways of thinking which prevent their acceptance would, if acted on in other matters, lead men to conclusions acknowledged to be wrong. He retorts on those who demand that religion must satisfy the theoretical and imaginary perfections which they would like, by pointing out that life, or history, or nature, does not satisfy this arbitrary test. Assuming that the natural universe is God's workmanship, or, if that is too big an assumption to ask, that it is rational, then religion reveals the same God, or is rational in the same sense. Experience is an unity, 'of a piece', to use Butler's phrase. Men are unreasonable who object to religion because it shews

¹ F. C. S. Schiller, *Formal Logic*, p. 342.

the same characteristics as life. Nature and Grace are expressions of the same God. That may be why nature was created. 'The very idea of an analogy between the separate works of God leads to the conclusion that the system which is of less importance¹ is economically or sacramentally connected with the more momentous system.'

Butler's use of the method of analogy, it has been suggested above, meant a revolution in theological method. Quite deliberately, he turned from the 'high *a priori*' road, both in ethics and in philosophy. He begins, not from infallibilities, but from facts. *A priori* reasoning, he says, is idle; and men of good will are open to persuasion by an argument which starts from matters of fact and observation.² So he deals with religion as a concrete fact.³ He stands always, typically English, with his feet on the earth, approaching every problem from the side of nature and experience, beginning with man's experience of God rather than with what God must have thought about man. Butler's work marks the beginning of the attempt to make theology an inductive science, for he believes in and seeks, not the God described by *a priori* speculation, but such a God as nature reveals.

It has been objected that Butler's whole argument leaves us where we were, or a little worse. We should not have expected that Revelation would contain the same difficulties as result from man's unaided reasoning from his experience, but rather that it would remove those difficulties. What is a revelation for, Sir Leslie

¹ J. H. Newman, explaining what he had gained from Butler's *Analogy*, *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, Chapter, i.

² *Analogy*, Introduction, § 9. *Rolls Sermons*, Preface, § 12.

³ *Ibid.*, ii, 8, § 11.

Stephen asks, if it is not to remove mysteries? That is contained, indeed, in the very meaning of the word. In ordinary use 'Revelation' certainly implies the lifting of a curtain or withdrawing of a veil. Butler seems to have committed himself to anomaly as a mark of revelation. His argument against the Deists was *ad hominem*. The cruelty and heartlessness in nature did not stagger their belief in a benevolent God of nature, so why should the anomalies of Scripture and Revelation prevent the belief in their divinity? 'If a divinely-ruled nature be red in tooth and claw, why should not the divine faith be so likewise? What is the lesson, by . . . analogy, of the volcano?'¹ The questions are certain to arise for many modern readers of the *Analogy*, whether the conception of Revelation has any permanent meaning, and, if so, whether Butler's defence of Revelation is valuable to-day.

Butler believed, in common with the unhistorical theology of his time, that the crude views of God and religion common among savages and other non-Christians were due to the corruption of an original miraculous revelation of the truths of natural religion. The Christian revelation, he taught, was on the one hand an authoritative republication of these truths, shrouded in doubt and ignorance, as they are, even for the greatest in the non-Christian world, and to be thought out or discovered, and confidently held, with the very greatest difficulty by the generality of men, apart from revelation and the visible support and admonition of them provided in the organized visible Church, but re-published, and that more clearly, in

¹ J. M. Robertson, *Rationalism*, pp. 52, 53.

Revealed Christianity.¹ And, in addition, Revelation proclaims truths undiscoverable by the unaided reason of men, such as the Incarnation and the dispensation of the Spirit, and God's purpose in the universe.² Butler's view of revelation is limited and defined by his thought that the chief end of man does not seem to be to acquire information; revelation is at best a little light in a great darkness, sufficient not to satisfy curiosity, but to discover what is one's duty.³ And, if that be a true account of it, it is not so obvious that Revelation is for nothing but to remove mysteries. It may be part of our discipline that we walk 'amid the encircling gloom'.

The Science of Comparative Religion, expressing, and applying to this sphere, the modern axiom of development, has made short work of the uncritical belief, which Butler shared with his contemporaries, in an 'original Revelation' of which non-Christian religions are 'corruptions'. There is no evidence that humanity began with any such perfect religion. The positive religions, including that of the Hebrews, are developments from very humble and imperfect beginnings. But this modern, more historical, point of view, only increases the importance of what is real in Butler's position. It is more clear than it was to anybody in 1730 that Christianity provides the necessary explanation and confirmation of the gropings and guesses after truth both of the positive religions and of speculative religious philosophy. And Butler's contention that Revelation proclaims truths undiscoverable by man's unaided reason agrees entirely with the conviction, so widely held to-day, that in such

¹ *Analogy*, II, i. §§ 1, 4-13.

² *Ibid.*, I, iii. § 29; II, i. §§ 14, 18.

³ *Ibid.*, II, vi. § 4.

a vital and practical concern as religion, the abstract theorisings of philosophers do not take us very far, and that the problems which life presents can only be solved by living. Because Revelation describes the element in our religion of concrete individual and historical experience,¹ reasoning can only give us truth about religion if it takes account of religious experience, or, in other words, if it starts from Revelation. In a matter of such transcendent importance for mankind it is inconceivable that any theory of what is essential should be considered adequate which gives the student and thinker a preponderating advantage over the plain man of good will; there must surely be a great truth in the Christian instinct that in matters so intimately concerning our fellowship with God and our duty in the world a certain levelling up of all men must be assumed; He has revealed these things to babes.² Just as art, according to Tolstoi, makes its appeal to the farm labourer, so religion is for man as man, apart from all distinctions of intellect or education. It is possible, of course, for the farm labourer to sophisticate his conscience by fear or selfishness or hypocrisy; but the truth of God is not adequate for any man's need unless it is available for every man. Philosophical acumen and breadth of experience are the monopoly of the few; but Revelation, the actual experience of God, is something that the simplest and most ignorant may have.

Revelation is primarily an individual experience of God, of His support in our weakness, His guidance in our perplexity, His claim on our obedience, His forgiveness of our sin, His salvation in our utmost need. It is not knowledge about God, but the

¹ C. C. J. Webb, *God and Personality*, p. 177.

² St. Matt. xi, 25.

experience of God Himself. 'It is the power that reveals itself in the workings of my conscience, or in the life, words, and actions of Jesus Christ, or of the Church of His servants and saints'.¹ Strictly speaking, it cannot be taught to another, but only quickened in another, as conscience, God's vicar, appropriates the record of a previous Revelation, and makes it our own. Religion spreads by a sort of spiritual contagion. So there has been a recognizable succession, a line of men of extraordinary sincerity and insight and willingness to obey, in which this experience has been enriched and deepened and intensified. This is the reality conventionally described as a 'particular' revelation, and it finds its culmination and meaning in the Incarnation, when God who had been immanent in human personalities, Himself expressed His personality in a human life. There is a sense in which all Revelation must be an Incarnation. Obviously, it must be in human terms, else it is no revelation but a blank mystery. But, more than that, if it is to meet all man's need it must not be in words only, however, compelling or inspiring, not even in symbol or sacrament, but in the freedom and insight and concreteness and particularity of a perfect life. It is the glory and difficulty of Christianity that it gives meaning to all history because it consecrates a particular moment of past time and worships a definite historical Person. In no other religion is there this apprehension of the universal in the particular without which our temporal experience must mean at once too much and too little.

The Christian revelation, because it is in this sense completely human, brings no facile, static, infallibility with it. We have to commit ourselves to it without reserve, to 'bet our lives' upon it, before we see it

¹ George Tyrrell, *Essays on Faith and Immortality*, p. 19.

succeeding, because we can no other. Its purpose is to educate our consciences and discipline our spirits into freedom, not to tame us into uniformity by an indubitable infallibility. The Revelation of God the Father, to which the Spirit of Jesus witnesses in our spirits, does not bring the superficial tranquillity of a comfortable certainty, but delivers our souls into the dangerous freedom of the sons of God.

At one time the North Sea fishermen brought their cod to market in tanks in the holds of their vessels. In the tanks the cod lived at ease, and came to market slack, flabby, and limp. Some genius among fishermen introduced one catfish into each of his tanks. Now the catfish is the demon of the deep and makes life interesting. The result was that his cod came to market firm, brisk, and wholesome. Revelation is like that. It keeps the soul awake. It introduces into life the 'queer, unpleasant, distracting touch of the kingdom of heaven'. It is given to make life difficult, to make us uncomfortable and insecure, to spare us no trouble; and because it shews us more of life's meaning, it makes life seem harder to understand.¹ The mysteries which revelation shares with life are the best part of our discipline and the supreme test of our submission to God's will.

Such theories as those of the Deists, which trust everything to the light of nature and find no useful place for Revelation, owe what plausibility they possess to their overlooking the fact of sin. The heart of man is very deceitful, and the sin we have committed, or acquiesced in, deadens our conscience, perverts our judgment, and blinds the eyes of the soul. Hypocrisy, and self-indulgence, and materialism, haunt our thoughts

¹ The *Nation*, March 9, 1912. C. Marriott, *The Catfish*, p.34. Dr. H. S. Holland, in *Our Place in Christendom*, p. 160.

and aspirations like a shadow, and make it almost impossible for us not to pervert the witness of the true, the beautiful, and the good, so that it ministers to the evil heart of unbelief. The fundamental implication of any belief in revealed religion is that God does not acquiesce in this failure. Because He is more than a Tendency or a Purpose, a Personality with Love and Initiative, free in His own world, a God 'concerned with being understood', infinitely patient and using all means to deliver us from misunderstanding and to win us from our enmity, He has revealed Himself 'in diverse ways and many bits' through His servants the prophets, and at last in His Son.

There are few theological questions on which the instinct and prejudice of the twentieth century differ so completely from those of the eighteenth as they do on the question of the support afforded to the Christian Revelation by prophecy and miracle. A very large proportion of the theological controversy of Butler's time dealt with these questions, and now, in its details, at least, it is almost unreadable. To Butler, miracles and the fulfilment of prophecy are the 'direct and fundamental proofs' of Christianity,¹ and no less than twenty-seven paragraphs (eighteen pages in Dr. Bernard's edition) are devoted to proving that miracles happen and that prophecy has been fulfilled.² Butler states clearly and plausibly what he considers to be their evidential value. If a man who believed in God and Providence were inclined to think he had perhaps 'got beyond the reach of his faculties', and was therefore in great danger of being carried away by the unbelief and denial about him, 'What a confirmation now must it be to such a man' to

¹ *Analogy*, ii. 7, § 2.

² *Ibid.*, ii. 7, §§ 1-27.

find that religion was revealed to men in the name of God, 'and that the publishers of the Revelation proved their commission from Him, by making it appear, that He had entrusted them with a power of suspending and changing the general laws of Nature!'¹ And the fulfilment of prophecy shews often in the case of the prophets a foresight more than natural, and is therefore evidence that the system of Revelation of which prophecy forms a part is of divine authority.

The old form of the argument from prophecy was often defended by a verbal and unintelligent use of Scripture,² by exaggerated ingenuity in explaining away obvious discrepancies between an event and its supposed prophecy, by an inadequate understanding of the great moral and religious work of the Hebrew prophets, and by unworthy conceptions of God. It has not been able to withstand a more natural and human exegesis, the application of historical methods to the study of the Old Testament, and a more thorough-going and conscious moralization of theological ideas. The great Hebrew prophets were preachers of moral and social righteousness, raised up at the crisis of the people's history to declare the will of God. They were men who 'spoke for' God. Some of the most profound spiritual intuitions and aspirations came into the consciousness of humanity through the loyalty and suffering of these servants of God, and the insight their faithfulness perfected in them. Hosea's broken heart gave him courage to believe in the strong patience of the love of God; the first Isaiah found a clue through the timid opportunism of Judah's foreign policies in the conviction that Jehovah cares for righteousness even

¹ *Analogy*, ii. 1, § 8.

² M. Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*, p. 105. Popular Edition.

more than He cares for Judah ; Jeremiah's isolation in days of overwhelming calamity made personal religion the centre and foundation of man's spiritual hope for all time, a permanent discovery and acquisition for the race ; and some unknown voice of the Exile declared in the Songs of the Servant of Jehovah (Isaiah xlii. 1-4 ; xlix. 1-6 ; l. 4-7, lii. 13 ; liii, 12) that mankind shall be redeemed to God through suffering willingly accepted for the sake of others. These great ideals, hopes, convictions entered into the consciousness of the best of God's people, and became the reality of their faith ; but they were never ' lived out ' in their fulness, never translated into a life of unfailing sympathy and understanding and service with a singleness of motive that would not be misunderstood, until ' the Word ' became Flesh, Ideal became Reality, Prophecy became History, and One came Whose love, without any sentimentality, made God's love credible, One Whose righteousness, without any taint of legalism, won men to a Holiness Whose service is ' perfect freedom ', Whose loneliness was the seed of a renewed fellowship of God with man which shall even yet perfect the fellowship of man with his brother, and Whose Cross has consecrated for millions their sorrow and their pains, and been in them a consummate inspiration to lives of vicarious sacrifice. The Lord Jesus recognized His kinship with the prophets ; His life chimed in tune with theirs across the centuries ; He was the meaning and confirmation of their hopes. He ' fulfilled ' the prophets in a sense more real, because less definite, than the controversy of the eighteenth century could perceive.

There is no need now to take the pains over the evidence for the Gospel miracles which were taken in Butler's day. Nobody believes that the apostles and

evangelists were consciously deceivers when they recounted the 'mighty works' of their Master. An open-minded sceptic like M. Anatole France says that it annoys him greatly to hear people say: 'We do not believe in miracles because none of them has ever been proved', and declares that the ignorant alone have assurance enough to decide whether an action is natural or not. This agrees entirely with Butler's statement that 'persons' notion of what is natural, will be enlarged in proportion to their greater knowledge of the works of God.'¹ What men find credible or incredible varies not only with their faith,² and their knowledge, but also with their temperament, and even more, perhaps, with the age in which they live. There are fashions in credibility. To-day theological discussion tends to emphasize the possibilities implied in our ignorance of the influence of mind on body, and of the *moral* sources of physical infirmity; so men find parallels to many of the Gospel 'miracles' in the phenomena of 'mental healing' and 'moral therapeutics.' And the unparalleled 'mighty works' in the gospels are thought of as 'natural' in some deep sense, the unique expressions of an unique Personality, parallel, in that way, to the tragedies of Shakespeare, or the sculpture of Michel Angelo. The difficulty about evidence does not arise.

The Lord Jesus Himself did not believe in the evidential value of miracles. He refused to give the people a 'sign from heaven' to vindicate His authority; with a certain fierce contempt He calls them a 'wicked and adulterous generation' for asking for a sign. The

¹ *Analogy*, i. 1, § 23.

² 'Faith does not spring from the miracles, but the miracles from faith'. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*. Book I., Chapter 5.

only sign they shall have is the reminder of men who repented when they heard the word of God.¹ It is no accident, but profoundly 'in character' that the recorded appearances of Christ after His resurrection are all to His friends, never once to convince His enemies. So far is He from viewing His miracles as one of the 'direct and fundamental proofs' of His gospel, that He seems to have found them an interference with His real work (St. Mark, i. 32-38), and repeatedly tells people to keep their cure a secret. His personality and teaching are their own sufficient witness. His insight and His example make an appeal to the conscience of humanity so absolute in its authority that no miracle can add to it. Religion is itself the most firm of realities, and the 'impregnable rock' on which alone faith can stand immoveable is not Holy Scripture, not 'the direct and fundamental proofs' supplied by prophecy or miracle, but the experience of those who, by the power of God in Jesus Christ, are being saved out of materialism and selfishness and hypocrisy into the freedom of the service of God.

It does not follow that the gospel miracles are at best irrelevant, and at worst a serious hindrance in the evangelization of certain classes in the modern world. Phrases like 'uniformity of nature' or 'natural law' may mean, strictly interpreted, that a Personality of unique quality, of limitless sympathy with and understanding of, God and man, with a disinterested singleness of aim which marks His will as the absolute revelation of the omnipotent love of God, that such a Personality would possess powers over Nature and Human Nature which

¹ Luke xi., 29, 30, and parallel passages. There seems no doubt that St. Luke is right in treating the reference to Jonah as a refusal of a 'sign'. St. Matthew's parallel between the resurrection and Jonah's return from the belly of the fish destroys the meaning of the context.

are unique in history. The principle 'same cause, same effect' must have as its corollary 'unique cause, unique effect.' The Gospel miracles are the demonstration that the universe is plastic to the demands of spirit. They mean that God is free in His own world, actively immanent, present to control the particular application of His laws.¹

The difficulties which Butler recognizes in Revelation as in nature, and the emphasis he puts on the limited certainty which mere reasoning can reach, throw into clear relief his confident trust in the supreme authority of conscience. 'Authority' or 'supremacy' is part of the very idea of conscience; without it, no man can form a full notion of what conscience is. To govern, to direct, to choose, to restrain some impulses and allow others—these belong to conscience because it is conscience. It has not to justify itself—it bears its own authority with it, because it is the law of our own nature, implanted in us by God, the Author of our nature. So that, to obey conscience is, on the one hand, to act 'according to nature', and, on the other hand, to keep the laws of God. It is this natural supremacy over all else in human nature, every other instinct, impulse, desire, or principle of action, which makes that nature a system at all, and not a mere anarchy of warring wishes. Conscience is God's light within us. 'Had it strength, as it has right, had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world'.²

Butler recognizes two limitations to this absolute infallibility of conscience, but these are important. He

¹ Cf. article by the present writer, *The Supernatural, The Incarnation, and the Eucharist*, in the *Church Quarterly Review*, January, 1920.

² *Analogy*, i. 6, par. 11, *Rolls Sermons*, Preface, §§ 14, 24; II, §§ 8, 42, 14; III, § 5.

recognizes, as does everybody whose ethics are not merely theoretical, that men's consciences are darkened by sin, so that they do not always tell them the truth about what actions are right. 'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness'.¹ Two of the Sermons at the Rolls deal with this lie in the soul which deceives the man himself, and lulls his conscience to sleep with equivocations, subterfuges, and palliations, or, using self-partiality and self-deceit, corrupts conscience, which is the only guide of life.² Conscience must be educated and enlightened; it must be obeyed if it is to become more sensitive; but men are not always right when they act conscientiously. Many of the cruelties of history have been perpetrated by those who thought that thereby they were doing God service.

The other limitation (perhaps it might be called a definition) which Butler suggests to the infallibility of conscience is his doctrine that moral precepts are reasonable.³ This, applied consistently and with thoroughness opens the door to an infinite moral progress. As Butler recognises that reason cannot be called in to justify Revelation without receiving the right to criticise it,⁴ so this doctrine, which Butler shares with Clarke, that the true rules of morality are essentially reasonable,⁵ inevitably implies not merely an instinctive or intuitive morality, but a 'criticised moral life'. Butler speaks of the 'supremacy' or 'authority' of conscience. He himself does not use of it the word 'infallible'.

Lord Acton wrote to Mr. Gladstone, on January 28, 1895, that 'the doctrine of the Sermons on the infallible

¹ S. Matthew vi., 23.

² *Rolls Sermons*, VII., § 10, x., § 16.

³ *Analogy*, II., 1, § 21.

⁴ *Analogy* II. 3, § 1.

⁵ Cf. H. Sidgwick, *Method of Ethics*, p. 378.

conscience is not only borrowed from Sarasa, but is also indefensible'.¹ Alphonse Antoine de Sarasa (1618-1667) a Jesuit of Spanish descent, was the author of *Ars semper gaudendi*, etc. (Part II published in 1667). The book went through many editions in several languages. Tract iv, of Part II, is entitled *De Conscientia probabili*. He teaches that men rightly act on probability, which in fact rests on firm and weighty reasons. The verdict of conscience gives us moral certainty; there is a bare possibility that its verdict is misleading; but it is more than a merely *subjective* moral certainty; he is thinking of the certainty which comes from moral judgments which rightly dictate to the understanding and so settle the mind that they exclude any real consideration of possible error. There is no evidence that Butler ever read Sarasa's book. The latter certainly brings together probability and the authority of conscience, but the teaching of the Jesuit has a more intimate resemblance to the teaching of Ritschl about 'judgments of worth' than to the less developed doctrine of Bishop Butler.

The comparative method in the sciences had not been dreamed of in the first half of the eighteenth century. In common with his age, Butler took 'morality' as something 'given'. That view has an arbitrary and accidental simplicity. The conscience whose 'supremacy' and 'authority' Butler discusses is the conscience of the 'urbane', gentlemanlike, individual of the middle classes in the Church of England in 1730. The age was badly instructed with regard to other countries, different civilizations, and past ages. It did not come within sight of some of those fundamental problems of morals which only disclose themselves by a comparison of

¹ Lord Acton's *Correspondence*, I., pp. 79, 80.

many different kinds of morality.¹ The change made by the doctrine of evolution has been revolutionary. Human nature is no longer the constant datum it was for eighteenth century thinkers. The 'moral law' has come into time in many bits. The 'moral sense' is a product of development, and humanity has progressed by the discovery of new sins. The demonstration that moral ideals cannot escape the categories of evolution has made men more cautious in speaking of the 'supremacy' or 'authority' of the individual conscience.²

Another side of this modern view, equally the product of biological and evolutionary ways of thinking, is the perception that personality is a social product. The Catholic Revival in English religion, and the decay of the Manchester school of economics, are both alike symbols of the passing of the individualism which was an axiom of eighteenth century thought. The most sensitive, the most 'modern', religious thinkers to-day make no claim to infallibility for their own conscience in isolation. That way is the road to eccentricity. Rather do they seek agreement with, the approval of, the humble, obedient, servants of God, the 'babes' to whom God's will is revealed, whose voice, though silent, is the voice of God. This is the very opposite of the 'fear of man' or the conventional respect for public opinion. It is the recognition that the community, whether it be Church or School or Trades Union, has a purpose and will of its own, and *educates* the conscience of each of its members. In so far as this corporate life is a reality, and the individual, repressing egotism and selfishness, appropriates the love and faith and obedience and devotion which are the treasures of the Catholic Church, the

¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 104.

² H. J. Laski, *Authority in the Modern State*, p. 44 (1919).

conscience of the individual is not merely an isolated spiritual judge, but becomes more universal the more truly individual it is; it is the Universal Conscience—God's vicar—speaking in and through the dictates of a man's own heart. Men are really the children of God, and all brothers, and the true freedom of love and humility does not lead to anarchy and confusion, but at last to that moral unity where the Voice of God speaks in the heart of each one. It is not so easy for the twentieth century, as it was for the eighteenth, to draw distinct lines across life. There are no longer any infallibilities. The shadows and mysteries and half-lights which Butler was singular in recognizing in the cold light of that age are the natural dwelling-places of all living minds to-day. But the most cautious recognizes that the light of conscience is a little less fallible than other guides. It is not, perhaps, so clear as Butler thought; it is not so clear as we should like it to be; but it is the best we have, and it is enough. If men will trust it, they will become safer. If they will get right with conscience, life will come right at last. That is the one thing needful. 'Had it strength, as it has right; had it power as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world.'

There are few things in Bishop Butler which puzzle the conscience of the ordinary modern reader so much as the high place he gives to 'self-love' in his system of ethics. He holds that it is not only coincident with the principle of virtue or moral rectitude, but is a part of the idea itself.¹ Of the three superior principles which order man's life into a moral unity, benevolence, self-love, and conscience, only the two latter are so fundamental that to contradict them is to act 'contrary

¹ *Analogy*, I, v., § 13.

to nature'.¹ By self-love he means the satisfaction of a man's own self, in the widest and deepest sense, 'the general desire of our own happiness'. Sometimes, indeed, he restricts reasonable self-love to our worldly interests,² but in general he includes the satisfaction of all the aspirations of the self, in the next world as well as in this.³ He asserts that although virtue consists in seeking good for its own sake, 'yet when we sit down in a cool hour', we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it.⁴ There is no doubt that such teaching does not sound very congenial to modern ears. It savours too much of that selfishness—even though it be a 'spiritual' selfishness, concerned with the future life as well as this, the unashamed profession of which was, Butler tells us, characteristic of his age.⁵ Butler is careful to shew that so far from self-love meaning the satisfaction of every passing impulse or passion, the sight of 'immediate good by present sense', as Pope defines it,⁶ its purpose is often defeated by immediate indulgence of the desires of the moment.⁷ He admits that immoderate self-love defeats its own ends,⁸ and that almost always self-love is a false medium of viewing things, magnifying everything which is amiss in others, at the same time that it lessens everything that is amiss in ourselves.⁹ And he states quite clearly that if a man is not convinced that his interest will be served by being virtuous, he still must do his duty.¹⁰ But even so

¹ *Rolls Sermons*, II, § 11.

² *Analogy*, I, IV, § 4.

³ Dissertation II, 'On Virtue', §16.

⁴ *Rolls Sermons*, XI, § 20.

⁵ *Rolls Sermons* XI, § 1.

⁶ *Essay on Man*, Epistle II, line 73.

⁷ *Rolls Sermons*, Preface, § 40, I, § 4.

⁸ *Rolls Sermons*, XI, § 8.

⁹ *Rolls Sermons*, IX, § 22.

¹⁰ *Rolls Sermons*, Preface, §§ 20, 21.

the emphasis on self-love and prudence makes Butler's 'map of life' rather uninspiring for a modern reader; a prosy ideal points the way to a jog-trot, flat-footed, career.

Is this impression justified? In ordinary, unreflecting, speech, the adjective 'selfish' implies blame, while 'unselfish' implies approval. Professor Dicey, for example, recognizes 'original sin' in the fact that each individual does, or rather must, think not exclusively, but primarily of his own self.¹ Butler, however, is unassailable when he remarks that 'Disinterestedness is so far from being in itself commendable, that the utmost possible depravity which we can in imagination conceive is that of disinterested cruelty.'² Nobody would argue that the obligation to visit the sick and feed the hungry, i.e. the obligation of benevolence, is so exclusive that to fulfil it every man ought to ruin his own business and spend all his money. And those whose gift to the community is, directly, themselves, (artists, teachers, or doctors, for example) can give nothing worth having unless they do their best to develop and exercise the powers which are given them.³ There must be a balance, a reconciliation, between benevolence and self-love. The saying of the Gospel must be taken literally: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'

To achieve this reconciliation is easier in practice than in theory. Men's motives in almost everything are

¹ *Law and Public Opinion*, 2nd Edition, p. lxxx.

² *Rolls Sermons*, Preface, § 39.

³ Paulsen, *System of Ethics*, p. 639. Goethe said to Eckermann: 'I have never asked myself in my profession as a literary man, "What do the public want, and how can I serve Humanity?"' But I always endeavoured only to make myself wiser and better, to enrich my own personality, and then always to say only what I had found to be good and true.'

mixed, egoistic and altruistic together, and the effects of what they do appear both in their own lives and those of others. If self-love seeks the satisfaction of the whole nature of the man himself, it must fulfil that part of him which loves his family, his Church, his neighbours, his country.¹ There is, indeed, no absolute distinction between 'self' and 'other'. A man is what he is because of his environment; had he been born in another country, professed another religion, gone to another school, entered another business, joined another Church—he would have been another man. The family whose interests may be supposed to conflict with his own is *his* family, the Church that asks him to deny himself is *his* Church, the country for which he dies is *his* country.² Where does self-love end and altruism begin? And yet the self is never fully realized in the community. There is an ideal self which ever seeks a better country, that is, a heavenly; a 'Father in heaven' Who is more than an idealization of an earthly relationship, a city which is never built and therefore built for ever. Benevolence, the love of the actual others who surround us, can never fulfil all the needs of the self. 'A man can dream of perfection, and, having once done so, he can find no end short of perfection. Here he has no abiding city.'³ Benevolence and self-love are ultimately reconciled, because they are included, in the love of God, as Christianity interprets God. He wills the good of others, and in His service a man finds 'perfect freedom' for his own self. He is Love, and He is the personified ideal of every human spirit.

The 'self' whose pleasure and satisfaction Butler teaches that it is a duty to seek, is the whole self, as

¹ *Rolls Sermons*, xi, §§ 15-16.

² Martineau, *Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. ii., p. 375.

³ McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, p. 193.

defined in the first three Sermons at the Rolls, a self in which impulses, desires, and passions are related into a system under the reasonable principles of self-love and benevolence, the whole under the supremacy and authority of reflection or conscience. To seek the eternal welfare of this reasonable self is part of the idea of virtue. Is there any one who will deny it? If there seem to be inconsistencies in Butler's account of self-love, these are illustrated by the contradiction in the Gospels between 'What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and yet lose himself?' and 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself.' There is an ideal self which can only be expressed and affirmed in sacrifice and self-denial, a concern for our own salvation which is all that conscience can require because it is a salvation into humility, and sincerity, and the joy of service, a self-love which wages a warfare without discharge against the false, blind self-love which clings to the natural man as it finds him, a self-love whose object is one's own real moral worth laboriously won and soberly acknowledged. Butler's use of the term is defined by his close association of it with conscience.

Even less congenial with modern taste is Butler's emphasis on 'rewards and punishments' in his theory of religion and life. Without any perception that an explanation or apology is required for his action, he brings the fear of punishment and the hope of reward to reinforce the attraction of goodness for its own sake. It is no great exaggeration to say that his usual representation of religion is a careful obedience to the will of God, in the expectation of reward for virtue and the fear of punishment for vice. Perfect moral government, he holds, would reward the righteous and punish the wicked in an exact proportion to their merits and

demerits.¹ Men are to do the right because, in John Stuart Mill's vivid phrase, 'God is stronger than we are, and able to damn us if we don't.'² Dr. S. Clarke taught that but for the prospect of future reward a man who died in a good cause would be no happier than the man who died in pursuit of any frivolous ambition. And, generally, Butler's contemporaries explained the distribution of pleasure and suffering so exclusively in terms of rewards and punishments as to cut the nerve of pity and lead to an ugly and pharisaic complacency in all who accepted it. It is true that Butler has too firm a grasp of facts not to admit that there are many exceptions to this external equivalence of pleasure and virtue, and pain and vice.³ Indeed, he leaves room for the full Christian doctrine of the redeeming power of suffering willingly accepted. But there is plausibility in the complaint that the emphasis on 'rewards and punishments' makes the reading of the *Analogy* depressing to the soul.⁴ From the days of Job until now the plain experience of life has made men revolt from this doctrine that happiness is distributed in proportion to merit.

Streams will not curb their pride
The just man not to entomb,
Nor lightnings go aside
To give his virtues room.
Nor is that wind less rough that blows
A good man's barge.

Righteousness does not claim an exact reward of happiness in proportion to individual merit. Virtue itself, and not happiness, is the reward of virtue. 'Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.'

¹ *Analogy*, i. ii., § 2.

² *Dissertations*, ii., p. 436.

³ *Ibid.*, i. 3, § 15.

⁴ Mark Pattison, *Essays and Reviews*, p. 293.

But this revolt of modern ethics against the 'sanctions' which a belief in heaven or hell bring to make good conduct easier is almost a platitude, and does not touch the root of the matter, either for Butler or for the twentieth century. Butler does not base his belief in morality on the expectation of reward or punishment, but, conversely, his expectation of the future is rooted in his recognition of the will of God. Conscience tell us that we have done evil, and that this our own judgment shall one day be confirmed by the higher judgment of God.¹ To be honest because it is the best policy is dishonest, to say the least, but to be certain that the very nature of things must bring dishonesty to failure and defeat is part of that faith which overcomes the world. An universe which produces men who can 'dream of perfection', who 'hunger and thirst after righteousness', and can leave finally unsatisfied and unfulfilled these ideals which it has provoked and educated, is an universe so fundamentally irrational and meaningless that it cannot be discussed. Ultimately, such an unbelief makes morality itself meaningless, a trick of 'natural selection' to make us deny ourselves and work for the race. If 'right' and 'wrong' (or 'virtue' and 'vice' as Butler would call them) are to have any meaning and value, in themselves and for their own sake, they must have absolute and eternal significance, and right must win because it is right, or God is not God. So Butler must be right in his conviction that after death it will be better for the righteous than for the wicked. Socrates believed it also, so has every great moral teacher the world has known. But, in a righteous and sane universe, the reward of the righteous

¹ *Rolls Sermons*, vii., § 16, Cf. also *Sermon* ii., § 8, xi., § 15 and *Analogy* i., iii., § 16.

is not houses and lands and cattle and full barns—nothing so mean as that—but the triumph of righteousness, the Kingdom of God, the manifestation of the Father of Lights.

Bishop Butler is the most English of all theologians, in his strength and in his weakness. He is very modest in his estimate of the distance that human speculation can penetrate into the mysteries of eternity. His affinities are with the empirical common-sense of the British school of philosophers, with Reid and John Stuart Mill, rather than with the transcendentalism of Fichte and Hegel and their successors. No Englishman, suspicious of ideas, could be more practical in his interests than Butler is. The true end of man is not to obtain knowledge, else were the Galilean fishermen no fit apostles. It is not his purpose to vindicate the ways of God; to attempt that task would be absurd for such a creature as man, in such a world as this. All that Butler seeks is all that men have a right to ask, to know what is their duty, and how they ought to do it. And not even the whole of duty, but only the next thing. One step is enough, and there is light for that.

And he is as modest in his spiritual expectations as in his intellectual demands. There is nothing 'far-fetched' or 'high-falutin' in his devotion, nor in the expression of it. There is no danger of his striving to wind himself too high for sinful man beneath the sky. He will pretend to no extraordinary revelations and gifts of the Holy Ghost. There is more of fear than of love in his religion; he is careful to do his duty; as the eyes of a servant wait upon their Lord, so he seeks the will of God; the 'abandon' of those who know the gladness of the children of God is not for him, nor the 'joy in believing' of those who share the vision on

the mountain top. Some will think him dull and drab; he spends so much time on the elementary things of religion; he is so scrupulous not to over-state anything. Good men do not often get their deserts in this world, but Butler thinks that it is perhaps something else than their goodness which prevents them. O for the un-studied religion, for the ecstasy and the mystic trance, and the reckless love that will fling away everything for the Lord Jesus! Butler counts the cost. He knows what he is doing. In cold blood, with open eyes, without heroics, he will walk and not faint. He is very English.

Bishop Butler never forgets that man has to live on the earth. Facts are what he desires. 'Things and actions are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be; why then do we desire to be deceived?' That is the temper which gives Butler his power (even in these days of evolution and the historical outlook) with the disillusioned, the sceptic, the man who is tired of rhetoric, and dogmatisms, and the fancies of those who have to make out a case for religion. His religion is a matter of fact. The Divine is not an exception in this world; it is made of the self-same stuff. Religion fits life because it has the same mysterious peculiarities, it has to run the gauntlet of the same plausible objections, it offers the same risks. The argument for it is *everything*. That, after all, is what he means by the Analogy of Nature, and why the conclusion is in the end only a probability. The sacramentalism is implied.

Bishop Butler is the typical Englishman of Charles Lamb's essay on 'Imperfect Sympathies'. His mind is suggestive rather than comprehensive. He is content with fragments and scattered pieces of Truth. Hints

and glimpses are the utmost he pretends to. The light that lights him is not steady and polar, but mutable and shifting; waxing and again waning. He is no systematiser. His mind does not bring, but find. He has falterings of self-suspicion, surmises, guesses, half-intuitions, partial illuminations, dim instincts. He lives in the twilight, he knows the borderland between the affirmative and the negative.¹ He maintains the Anglican tradition, linking the 'judicious Hooker' who wrote of the Most High, 'our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him not as indeed He is, neither can know Him; and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence,'² with the Newman who wrote,

'Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,

Lead Thou me on!

The night is dark, and I am far from home,—

Lead Thou me on!

Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see

The distant scene,—one step enough for me.

The characteristic contribution of Anglicanism to man's thought of God is this humble trust which rejects the too easy way of those who are content to start from external infallibilities, refuses to shut its eyes to the mysteries of life, but finds in Conscience, God's Vicar, educated by the Church's fellowship and authority, nourished and inspired by Holy Scripture, enlightened and judged by Reason, the sufficient light in the darkness of this earthly life. It is because he embodies this 'Christian agnosticism' as no other does, that Butler is still, what Newman called him³ a century after his death, 'the greatest name in the Anglican Church.'

¹ *Essays of Elia*, pp. 116-120. Dent & Co., 1919.

² *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book i, ii, 2.

³ In a letter to Dr. Hawkins, Provost of Oriel.

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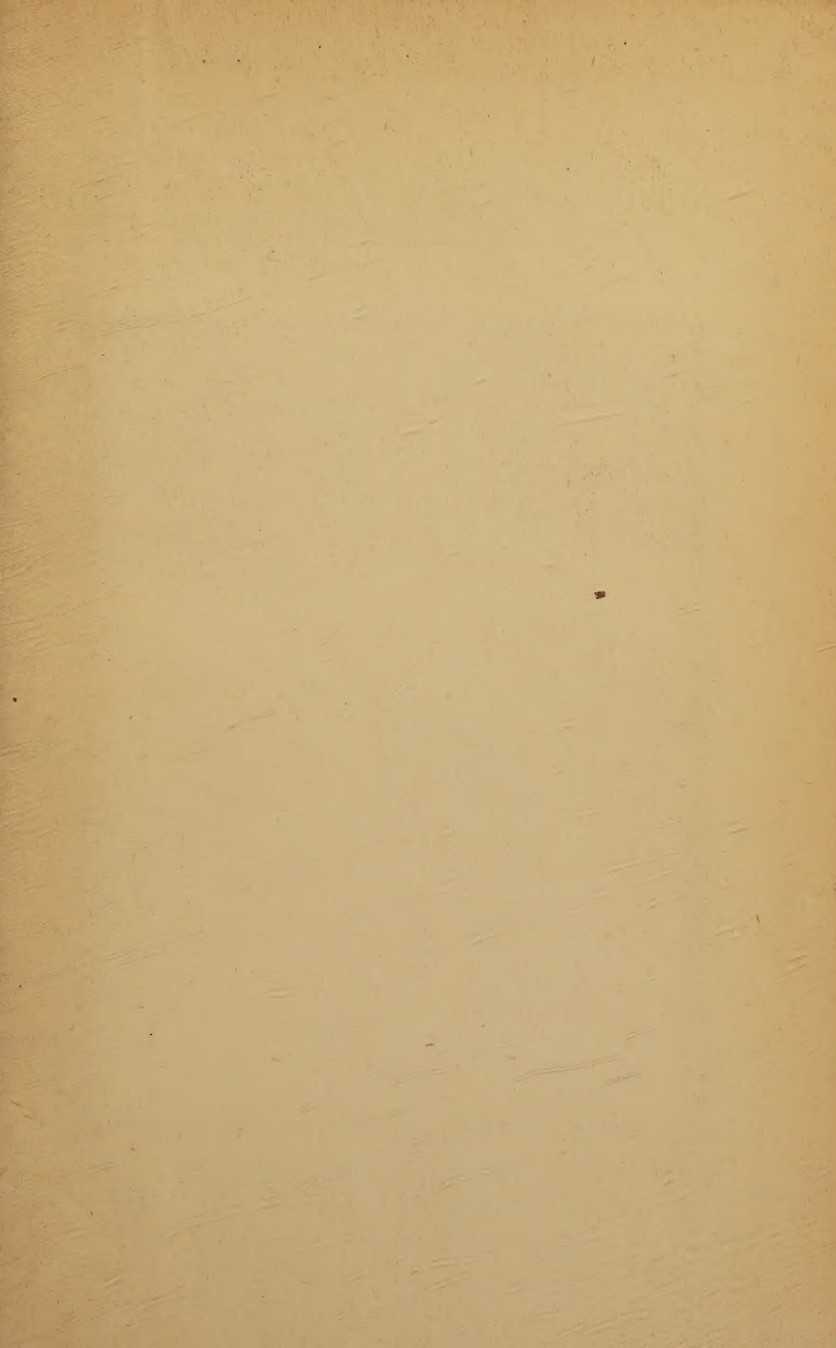
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